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THE FEELING FOR NATURE

IN

SCOTTISH POETRY

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SCOTTISH POETRY

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BY

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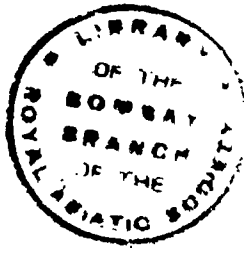

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE FEELING FOR NATURE IN SCOTTISH POETRY.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PERIOD FROM THE UNION OF THE CROWNS TO ALLAN RAMSAY.

(1603–1725.)

TRANSITION PERIOD: SIR ROBERT AYTOUN (1570–1638) —WILLIAM DRUMMOND (1585–1649).

With the passing away of the men mentioned in the foregoing chapter, Scottish poetry sank into a species of theological bondage, which destroyed its freedom, spirit, and power during the latter half of the sixteenth century. The union of the Crowns in 1603 helped still further to enervate, or even quench, its native spirit.

The language of Scotland had begun to lose its vernacular character before the commencement of this century; and the English translation of the Bible, being made the matter of general popular reading, still further contributed to a change in the language, and its assimilation with the English of the south. The departure of the Court from Edinburgh, the comparative poverty of Scotland, and the attendance of many of its principal Lairds and Lords on the King and Court in London, deepened English influence on the language and literature of the northern part of the kingdom. A Scottish writer, to find a general audience, must abandon the vernacular and compose in English. Hence we find a distinct decadence, and even abandonment, of the native language by Scottish writers. Unfortunately, this was not replaced by a pure English style, for the Scot could not get wholly rid of his native idioms; and there thus arose an imitation of English, rather than English itself, in the literature of the north. This, at least, is true of those Scottish writers who printed and published their works, but not true of all who were cultivating the native muse—for, no doubt, the ballad makers and reciters

during this seventeenth century were numerous. They used the vernacular, as it was developing and changing, almost wholly unaffected by external influences; and, what is more, these unknown minstrels, "who saved other names and left their own unsung," were preserving and cherishing—chiefly in the glens of the Yarrow, the Teviot, and the Tweed — those memories, incidents, fancies, and feelings of the past which were, a century and a half afterwards, to quicken and set aflame the splendid imagination of Walter Scott. It was a long winter and spring, but the summer and autumn were very glorious. Meanwhile, however, the few poets of Scottish birth and origin who can be noted in this seventeenth century belong mainly to the upper rank of society, and were educated after the English fashion and in the English speech. They have ceased to be distinctively Scottish in subject, feeling, and treatment. They are mainly, in a word, Court poets of the seventeenth century. This is eminently true of two men of note—Aytoun and Alexander.

Sir Robert Aytoun (1570-1638) was the son of Andrew Aytoun of Kinaldie, in Fife. He is credited with the distinction of being the first

Scottish writer who composed correctly in the English of the classical writers of the south. He has left elegantly written love sonnets and poems. His 'Sonnet to the Tweed' is of interest, as being one of the earliest poems having this river famed in song as its subject. It seems to have been written on the occasion of the death of a friend by drowning in the river:—

"Fair famous flood, which sometime did divide,
But now conjoins two diadems in one,
Suspend thy pace, and some more softly glide,
Since we have made thee trustman of our moan,
And since none's left but thy report alone,
To show the world our Captain's last fareweil;
That corse, I know, when we are gone,
Perhaps your lord-sea will it you reveal,
And you, again, the same will not conceal;
But straight proclaim'd thro' all his bremish bounds,
Till his high tides these flowing tidings tell,
And soon will send them, with his murm'ring sounds,
To that religious place, whose stately walls
Does keep the heart, which all our hearts enthralls." *

Poems of Sir Robert Aytoun, edited by Roger, p. 58.

I quote this chiefly to show the contrast between affectation and conceit in fancy and expression, and the naturalness and spontaneity which characterise the native songs of the Tweed and the Yarrow. How simply, yet how touchingly, are we told—

> "Syne in the cleavin' of a crag
> They found him drowned in Yarrow"!

William Alexander, afterwards Sir William and Earl of Stirling (1580-1640), was a distinguished personage in his time. He was the son of Alexander Alexander of Menstrie. His 'Aurora'—a collection of sonnets and songs of love—was published in 1604. These were an inspiration flowing from a real passion. But his writings yield nothing of interest to us in our present investigation.*

* Alexander is remembered for his co-operation with the King in the institution of the order of Baronets of Nova Scotia in 1621. This was a device simply to raise money for the impoverished royal exchequer of the mean James VI. The plan was to divide a tract of land in Nova Scotia into one hundred parcels, to put on each the price of about two hundred pounds, and to offer it at this sum, with the title of Baronet thrown into the bargain. The bait took, though many of the representatives of the older families of the time—espe-

There is, however, one exception among these learned poets, and that an illustrious one. I refer to William Drummond of Hawthornden, who, while English in language and culture, yet was very Scottish in reference to scenery, and stands between the old mode of looking at it and the more modern.

William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649) was the son of Sir John Drummond, who was second son of Sir Robert Drummond of Carnock. The Carnock family was of the distinguished house of Stobhall. One of these, Annabella Drummond, was the mother of James I., and thus Drummond of Hawthornden was of the blood of the poet-king. His is the greatest name in the Scottish roll of poets in the seventeenth century. He was a man of unquestionable natural genius, aided by high culture and great skill in versification. He is, as a rule, elegant and reflective, and not unfrequently powerful, especially in description. Some of his sonnets are among the

cially the lairds of baronies—despised the manœuvre. It was simply a degradation of the old and worthy order of knighthood, which was founded on personal distinction. Unfilled schedules were actually hawked about the country for signatures!

most exquisite in the English language. From his sensitive and retiring disposition, his love of solitude and a meditative life, the surroundings of Hawthornden, where he chiefly lived, and the scenery of "the murmuring Esk," we might have expected even fuller references to nature in his poems, and these characteristic of Scottish landscape, than we actually find. But the study of English literature, classical authors, and, especially in Drummond's case, feebly forcible Italian models, absorbed his attention, and probably also led to themes more congenial to his taste than the scenery which he saw every day —fine and in many aspects romantic as it was. Yet we may be thankful for what Drummond did in this department. It is clear that he felt certain aspects of the scenery of his native country as no one had done before his time. The love-passion which inflamed him in early life, and the premature death of the loved one, formed the strongest influence in his career. He has beautifully interwoven this passion in several sonnets with the aspects of outward nature, many features of which are distinctly recognisable as of the Lowlands of Scotland. Thus—

"With flaming horns the Bull now brings the
yeare,
Melt do the mountains' horrid helms of snow,
The silver floods in pearly channels flow,
The late bare woods green anadeams do weare;
The nightingall, forgetting winter's woe,
Cals up the lazy morne, her notes to heare:
Then flowers are spread, which names of princes
beare—
Some red, some azure, white, and golden grow.
Here lowes a heifer, there baa-wailing strayes
A harmlesse lamb, not far a stag rebounds;
The shepheards sing to grazing flocks sweet
layes,
And all about the echoing aire resounds—
Hils, dales, woods, flouds, and ev'ry thing doth
change,
But she in rigour, I in love am strange."*

This is true pure feeling, with delightful touches. It breathes of the reviving spring and early summer south of the Pentlands, and foreshadows the pastoral strains of Allan Ramsay and of the songs devoted to the shepherd and rural life of the Lowlands. We are not now

* *Poems*, p. 6.

far from the scenery and background of 'The Gentle Shepherd.'

And this is very near even its characters:—

Phillis.

"In petticoat of green,
Her hair about her eyne,
Phillis beneath an oak
Sat milking her fair flock:
Among that strained moisture, rare delight!
Her hand seemed milk in milk, it was so white."

It was thus not without a certain historical significance that Ramsay, while the second edition of 'The Gentle Shepherd' was passing through the press, set up as a patriotic sign above the door of his shop as a bookseller in the Luckenbooths the "presentment of the head" of William Drummond of Hawthornden, along with that of Ben Jonson.

Again the following is very beautiful:—

"The sun is fair, when he with crimson crown
And flaming rubies leaves his eastern bed;
Fair is Thaumantia in her crystal gown,
When clouds engemm'd hang azure, white, and red:

To western worlds when wearied day goes down,
And from Heaven's windows each star shows her head,
Earth's silent daughter, Night, is fair, though brown;
Fair is the Moon though in love's livery cled;
Fair Chloris is when she doth paint Aprile;
Fair are the meads, the woods; the floods are fair;
Fair looketh Ceres with her yellow hair,
And apples' Queen when rose-cheek'd she doth smile.
That heaven and earth and seas are fair is true,
Yet true that all please not so much as you."

Again:—

"Deare Wood, and you, sweet solitary Place,
Where I estrangèd from the vulgar live,
Contented more with what your shades me give,
Than if I had what Thetis doth embrace;
What snaky eye, grown jealous of my peace,
Now from your silent horrours would me drive,
When Sun, advancing in his glorious race
Beyond the Twins, doth neare our Pole arrive?
What sweet delight a quiet life affords,
And what it is to be from bondage free,

Far from the madding worldlings' hoarse discords,
Sweet flow'ry place, I first did learne from thee.
Ah! if I were mine owne, your deare resorts
I would not change with princes' stateliest courts." *

In another sonnet he refers to—

"The mountaine's pride, the meadows' flowery grace,
The stately comlinesse of forrests old,
The sport of flouds which would themselves embrace." †

Again:—

"Fair yokes of ermeline,[1] whose colour pass
The whitest snows on agèd Grampius face."

[1] Ermine.

These lines contain perhaps the first loving, imaginative appreciation of mountain, forest, and flood in Scottish poetry. Drummond has other pictures of the same kind:—

"Ah! as a pilgrim who the Alpes doth passe,
Or Atlas temples crowned with winter glasse,

* *Poems*, p. 34. † Ibid., p. 47.

The ayry Caucasus, the Apennine,
Pyrènes clifts where sun doth never shine,
When he some craggy Hills hath over-went,[1]
Begins to thinke on rest, his journey spent,
Till mounting some tall Mountaine, he do find
More heights before him than he left behind;
With halting pace so while I would me raise
To the unbounded limits of thy Praise,
Some part of way I thought to have o'errun,
But now I see how scarce I have begun,
With wonders new my spirits range possesst,
And wandering waylesse in a maze them rest."

[1] Over-wended.

The well-known similar passage in Pope, in the 'Essay on Criticism,' is obviously a copy of this, and not by any means so freshly and forcibly put.

The reference to Atlas has clearly been suggested by Virgil:—

"Oceani finem juxta, solemque cadentem,
Ultimus Æthiopum locus est, ubi maximus Atlas
Axem humero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum." †

Again, speaking of the wrath of God:—

* *Poems*, p. 131. † *Æneid*, IV., ll. 480-482.

"Carmel and Hæmus felt it, Athos tops
Affrighted shrunk, and near the Æthiops
Atlas, the Pyrenees, the Apennine,
And lofty Grampius, which with snow doth shine." *

This is exceedingly significant. No one in Scottish poetry before the time of Drummond had noticed snow on a mountain except with aversion. No one's eye had, up to his time, caught the beauty of the height "which with snow doth shine"; and yet this is the grand feature of the Scottish winter landscape. Obviously, his foreign travel — in Italy, Spain, and other portions of Southern Europe — had widened and quickened his vision beyond that of the homespun poets. He had seen the glory of the morning and evening sun laid on the snow-topped Italian Alps; and he was thus taught to recognise a similar though fainter glory in his own land.

Drummond's 'Forth-Feasting,' written in 1617 in honour of the king's visit to his native Scotland, has some admirable passages, and is rich in local allusion and descriptive epithet:—

* *Poems*, p. 33 (fol. ed., 1711).

"And you, my Nymphs, rise from your moist repaire,
Strow all your springs and grots with lilies faire:
Some swiftest-footed, get them hence, and pray
Our flouds and lakes come keep this holy-day;
What e'er beneath Albania's hills do run,
Which see the rising or the setting sun,
Which drinke sterne Grampius mists or Ochel snows;
Stone-rowling Tay, Tine tortoise-like that flows,
The pearly Don, the Deas, the fertile Spay,
Wild Neverne,[1] which doth see our longest day;
Nesse, smoaking sulphur, Leave[2] with mountains crown'd,
Strange Loamond, for his floating isles renown'd;
The Irish Rian, Ken, the silver Aire,
The snaky Dun, the Ore with rushy haire,
The christall-streaming Nid, loud bellowing Clyde,
Tweed, which no more our kingdoms shall divide;
Rank-swelling Annan, Lid with curled streams,
The Eskes,[3] the Solway where they lose their names:

[1] Navar.

[2] Leven.

[3] Black and White Esk, which unite to form the Esk in Eskdalemuir.

To ev'ry one proclaime our joyes and feasts,
Our triumphs; bid all come and be our guests:
And as they meet in Neptune's azure hall,
Bid them bid sea-gods keep this festivall."

His picture of the Scottish character, and its relation to the circumstances of locality, is both true and beautifully given:—

"Faith, milk-white Faith, of old belov'd so well,
Yet in this corner of the world doth dwell,
With her pure sisters Truth, Simplicity;
Here banished Honour bears them company:
A Mars-adoring brood is here, their wealth
Sound minds, and bodies of as sound a health.

. . . . . .

Heaven's arch is of their roofe, the pleasant shed[1] [1] Shade.
Of oake and plaine oft serves them for a bed.
To suffer want, soft pleasure to despise,
Run over panting mountains crown'd with ice,
Rivers o'ercome, the wastest lakes appall,
Being to themselves oars, steerers, ship and all,
Is their renown; a brave all-daring race,
Courageous, prudent, doth this climate grace."

On this, Irving* quotes from Buchanan the

* *Scottish Poetry*, p. 553.

following lines, which Drummond evidently had in mind:—

"Illa pharetratis est propria gloria Scotis,
Cingere venatu saltus, superare natando
Flumina, ferre famem, contemnere frigora et æstus;
Nec fossa et muris patriam, sed Marte tueri,
Et spreta incolumem vita defendere famam."*

These lines:—

Leven. "Leave[1] with mountains crown'd,"—

And—

"here hills aspire
To crown their heads with the æthereall fire:
Hills, bulwarks of our freedome, giant walls,
[2] Stranger's. Which never fremdling's[2] slight nor sword made thralls;"

—these indicate the first yearning outbreak of the Scottish heart in song to the mountains of the land, and the true historical feeling for the mountain walls and the mountain barriers which really saved the freedom of the country. The æsthetical feeling and the patriotic associations had never occurred to the earlier poets, or touched them in any way.

* *Sylvæ*, IV.

Again, Drummond felt deeply the pathos of nature:—

"Look as the flow'r which ling'ringly doth fade,
The morning's darling late, the summer's queen,
Spoyl'd of that juyce which kept it fresh and green,
As high as it did raise, bows low the head:
Right so the pleasures of my life being dead,
Or in their contraries but only seen,
With swifter speed declines than erst it spread,
And blasted, scarce now shows what it hath been.
Therefore, as doth the pilgrim, whom the night
By darknesse would imprison on his way,
Thinke on thy Home, my Soule, and thinke aright
Of what's yet left thee of life's wasting day.
Thy sun posts westward, passèd is thy morne,
And twice it is not given thee to be borne." *

After the death of his love, he writes:—

"As in a dusky and tempestuous night
A star is wont to spread her locks of gold,
And, while her pleasant rays abroad are rolled,
Some spiteful cloud doth rob us of her sight,

* *Poems*, p. 104.

Fair soul, in this black age so shined thou bright,
And made all eyes with wonder thee behold,
Till ugly Death, depriving us of light,
In his grim, misty arms did thee enfold."

This is as modern in feeling and expression even as anything in our own century.

Again:—

"But why wouldst thou here longer wish to be?
One year doth serve all Nature's pomp to see."

Again we have a fine touch in these lines:—

"Look to this dying lilly, fading rose,
Darke hyacinthe, of late whose blushing beames
Made all the neighbouring herbs and grass rejoyce,
And think how little is 'twixt Life's extreames.
The cruel tyrant that did kill those flow'rs,
Shall one, aye me! not spare that spring of yours." *

The hyacinth which makes the neighbouring herbs rejoice, and the whole feeling of the piece, are worthy even of Wordsworth.

* *Poems*, p. 24.

How exquisitely put is this!—

"That silver star which, with its silver light,
Makes day oft envy the eye-pleasing night."

This—the pathetic side of nature—which awes and subdues, while it interests the heart and quickens the best aspirations,—was before hardly, if at all, known to Scottish poetry. Drummond, in this as in other important respects, stands as the mediator between the old feeling and the new; and the mood of mind in relation to nature which characterised him grew up within that circle of country which, with the Pentlands for its northern boundary, stretches southwards across the Tweed to the Cheviots—a district in which there have grown and culminated the love of native scenery, the sense of natural beauty, the thrilling associations of local names—more intense, more rich, more impressive than anywhere else in Scotland. For do we not know the power and the inspiration of Habbie's How, Ashiesteil, Newark, Melrose, and Branksome? of the storied valleys of the Tweed, the Gala, the Yarrow, and the Teviot?—these companioned and crowned by hill and moorland, sacred to the bent, the

bracken, and the heather, and dear to the heart of solitude.

The very name of Drummond's residence and retreat is poetic—"caverned Hawthornden." It is now as it was restored by the poet in 1638—quaint-roofed, quaint-gabled—pinnacles and wood overhanging the cliff that slopes down to the Esk, whose waters then, as was specially befitting, flowed clear and unstained between its romantic banks. Its rock, walks, and aged sycamore are still associated with the meditative poet in his imaginings and his musings, as Plato mused on the passing show known as the world and man, in contrast with the ever-abiding—

"The Essence pure that doth this All uphold."

Then there was that memorable visit and sojourn of Ben Jonson here with Drummond—two spirits of different mould, yet sympathetic and united through the rare poetic soul. And it was in fitting continuity that, upwards of a century and a half after the death of Drummond, a cottage in the village of Lasswade, not far from where Drummond spent his life, should have been the first country dwelling of Walter Scott — where, too, Wordsworth and he first

grasped each other's hand. How lovingly has Scott sung of the scenery of the Esk of this fresh period of his life!—

"Sweet are the paths, O passing sweet!
By Eske's fair streams that run,
O'er airy steep, through copsewood deep,
Impervious to the sun.

Who knows not Melville's beechy grove,
And Roslin's rocky glen,
Dalkeith, which all the Virtues love,
And classic Hawthornden?"

The remains of Drummond repose in an aisle in the churchyard of Lasswade:—

"Here Damon lies, whose songs did sometime grace
The murmuring Esk: may roses shade the place!"

The three Semples—Sir James, Robert, and Francis—grandfather, father, and son—are humorous and satirical, but show no feeling for natural scenery. Sir David Murray; Sir Robert Ker Earl of Ancram, younger son of Sir Andrew Ker of Ferniehurst; Garden of Aberdeen; Wil-

liam Lithgow; William Cleland; Alexander Pennecuik, M.D., of Newhall; Alexander Pennecuik, Burgess of Edinburgh; William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, who died in 1751, — afford no gleanings. These pretty well fill up the space until we reach the union of the Parliaments and the date of Allan Ramsay.

While it was the fashion for the leading poets in Scotland to abandon the vernacular for English, there were others who sought Latin as the form of their verse. In 1637 appeared a remarkable volume, entitled 'Delitiæ Poetarum Scotorum,' published at Amsterdam by John Blaeu, under the auspices of Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet. It contains contributions from thirty-seven Scottish scholars, and affords remarkable proof of the high state of classical learning in the country. Among these are Arthur Johnston (1587-1641)—after Buchanan the prince of Scottish Latinists—Patrick Adamson, Andrew Melville, Lord Thirlestane, Hercules Pollock, David Wedderburn.* Probably the broken and transitional state of the language

* See the full list in Professor Masson's *Drummond of Hawthornden*, p. 250.

which had been spoken by Sir David Lyndsay, Alexander Montgomerie, Napier of Merchiston, and George Buchanan, was a barrier to its literary use—at least in scholarly hands, whose training made them greater adepts in Latin verse than in English poetry or prose. This volume may be taken as representing the literary tendency and accomplishment of the cultured men of the time. Obviously it had little or nothing distinctively national about it. It was merely a side-stream of the classical current of the period.

CHAPTER XIII.

MODERN PERIOD: ALLAN RAMSAY.

(1686-1758.)

ALLAN RAMSAY (1686-1758) is by far the most interesting and influential literary personage in Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century. To his example, impulse, and suggestions of new lines of poetry, we owe much of all that is best in Scottish poetry and literature since his time. Fergusson and Burns could not have done what they did, unless as coming after Ramsay, and being thus enabled to start from the high level both of feeling and of accomplished versification which he had attained. Ramsay had the courage, in a conventional time both in English and Scottish poetry, to recognise and be true to the manners, the simple

everyday life, the rural character, and the scenery of his native land. For this he was peculiarly fitted by his genius, the circumstances of his boyhood, and the nature of his early education. Ramsay, the descendant of two old Scottish houses, Dalhousie and Douglas, was yet born of parents in an ordinary social position at Leadhills—that elevated picturesque moorland which lies within the fold of the charmingly green Lowthers, and where the head-waters of Glengonnar, Elvan, and the grand Mennock rise and trend on opposite sides to the fertile valleys of the Clyde and the Nith. The romantic defile of the Enterkin and the equally grand pass of Mennock—the highway from old Strathclyde into Pictish Galloway—are near to the west. High, isolated, pastoral, and romantic, this moorland spot was a fit place for the birth and upbringing in boyhood of a susceptible youth, destined to note and to paint rural manners and the unvisited scenery of the recesses and the uplands of his native land. Ramsay spent the first fifteen years of his age in the village of Leadhills, receiving his education, up to that period, at the parish school of the place. He acquired there some know-

ledge of Latin, but that seems to have been the extent of his classical attainments; and perhaps it was well for the interests of the Scottish vernacular and truly national poetry that he progressed no further. He would thus not think of competing with the learned poets and scholars of the time; he would seek no place in the roll of the authors of the 'Delitiæ Poetarum Scotorum'—content with appealing directly to the hearts of the people. There he has secured a place, and there he will be cherished in an immortality of memory.

Ramsay came to Edinburgh in 1701, where he was apprenticed to a wig-maker — then a business higher in the social scale than anything corresponding to it in these days. Here he came under the influence, in the first place, of the older Scottish poetry, through the publication of 'Watson's Choise Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems, both Ancient and Modern, by several hands,' which appeared in three parts, in 1706, 1709, and 1711. Ramsay was an apprentice lad of seventeen when Watson printed the first part of his 'Collection.' The second edition appeared in 1713, "printed and sold at his shop, next door to the *Red Lyon*, opposite to

the *Luckenbooths.*" The preface to the First Part bears that this was the first collection of its kind in the vernacular.

Among other poems, Watson's 'Collection' contains 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' 'The Cherry and the Slae' of Montgomerie, 'Cælia's Country House' by Sir George Mackenzie, 'Forth-Feasting' by Drummond of Hawthornden, 'Three Poems' by Sir Robert Aytoun. Among Ramsay's first efforts was that of adding a canto to 'Christ's Kirk on the Green.' Watson's 'Collection' not only influenced him greatly, but led him to form collections of the same kind. Ramsay's 'Tea-Table Miscellany' appeared in January 1724, and his 'Evergreen' in October of the same year. The latter is founded chiefly on the Bannatyne MS., then in the possession of William Carmichael, brother of the Earl of Hyndford, and lent by him to Ramsay. Ramsay was not a good editor of the older poems. He was not well skilled in the language, and he took unwarrantable liberties with the text. But he himself profited in his poetical growth by his labour. The study of these older national pieces fixed the bent of Ramsay's genius. They recalled historical in-

cidents and scenes, suggested the manners of rural and everyday life, were written many of them in the vernacular; and if they did not contain descriptions of scenery for their own sake, they yet suggested localities, contained pictures by the way, and allusions to nature for purposes of simile and illustration. Out of these rose the suggestions and the inspiration which, when fused in a whole, gave birth to 'The Gentle Shepherd' in 1725.

Of the general merits of this poem, as a pastoral, this is not the place to speak. These are now definitely and permanently recognised. A Scotsman who retains his nationality cannot read it without feeling its truth and its power. Properly enough it does not pause on descriptions of scenery, nor does it unduly prolong them; but they are there as the groundwork of the piece, constantly recurring, well woven into the progress of the incidents; and truer or more apt pictures of certain aspects of the Scottish landscape we have not in the language. Ramsay overleaps the garden limits, so common and tiresome in the older poets; goes out into the meadows, the fields, and the pastoral moorlands; daunders by the burn, climbs the hill-

side, and tells us what he finds there at first hand—what the eye sees and the ear hears—and tells it so deftly, so briefly often, that a few lines contain a complete picture. His painting is thoroughly realistic, taken straight from nature, and yet it is completely typical of the scene. Ramsay first revealed the power and the beauty of the Lowland and pastoral landscape of Scotland. To grandeur or sublimity he never rises. We have nothing of mountain power, beetling crag, deep corrie, or unfathomable glen—nothing of the stern and the wild in our scenery. His somewhat toned-down and timid spirit, always tending to the golden mean in action and even imagination, shrank from this; and it was as yet hardly recognised in the feeling of the time. The sympathy with and depicting of this side of things came much later. It is neither in Fergusson nor in Burns. Leyden probably was the first after Ramsay to feel it; and it comes to its climax in Scott. Withal, Ramsay's work in this direction is invaluable; and one of its merits is, that it first led a native artist—David Allan—in 1788, to illustrate with the pencil those native scenes which Ramsay had so well portrayed in words. This gave a direction to Scottish art,

the fruits of which the country has reaped richly since the last quarter of last century.

The key-note to Ramsay's mode of dealing with nature is in these lines :—

"I love the garden wild and wide,
Where oaks have plum-trees by their side;
Where woodbines and the twisting vine
Clip round the pear-tree and the pine;
Where mixed jonquils and gowans grow,
And roses 'midst rank clover blow
Upon a bank of a clear strand,
In wimplings led by Nature's hand.
Though docks and brambles here and there
May sometimes cheat the gardener's care,
Yet this to me's a paradise
Compared with prim-cut plots and nice,
Where Nature has to Art resigned,
Till all looks mean, stiff, and confined.

. . . . . .

Heaven Homer taught; the critic draws
Only from him and such their laws:
The native bards first plunge the deep
Before the artful dare to leap." *

This was the new spirit, the very spirit of

* *Epistle* to W. Somerville, 1729.

Scott himself, carried in him to a greater height and freedom :—

> "On the wild hill
> Let the wild heath-bell flourish still;
> Cherish the tulip, prune the vine;
> But freely let the woodbine twine,
> And leave untrimmed the eglantine." *

In 'The Gentle Shepherd' the pictures of scenery, complete and rounded, are too numerous to quote; but it is only by reference to some of these that we can understand the change which has now come over the mode of dealing with the Scottish landscape. The Prologue to each scene contains a perfect image. Thus, to Act I., Scene 1, we have the following Prologue :—

"Beneath the south side of a craigy bield,
Where crystal springs the halesome waters yield,
Twa youthfu' shepherds on the gowans lay,
Tenting their flocks ae bonny morn of May.
Poor Roger granes,[1] till hollow echoes ring,
But blither Patie likes to laugh an' sing."

[1] Groans.

* *Marmion*, Int., c. iii.

Patie and Roger.

"*Pat.* This sunny morning, Roger, cheers
my blood,
And puts all nature in a jovial mood.
How heartsome 'tis to see the rising plants,
To hear the birds chirm o'er their pleasing
rants!
How halesome 'tis to snuff the cauler air,
And all the sweets it bears, when void of care!
What ails thee, Roger, then? What gars thee
grane?
Tell me the cause of thy ill-season'd pain."

In Scene II., Prologue, we have—

"A flowrie howm atween twa verdant braes,
Where lasses use to wash and spread their claes;
A trotting burnie wimpling thro' the ground,
Its channel pebbles, shining, smooth and round;
Here view twa barefoot beauties, clean and
clear;
First please your eye, then gratify your ear."

Peggy and Jenny.

"*Jen.* Come Meg, let's fa' to wark upon
this green,
This shining day will bleach our linen clean;

The water's clear, the lift unclouded blue,
Will make them like a lily wet with dew.

Peg. Gae farer up the burn to Habbie's How,
Where a' the sweets of spring and summer grow;
Between twa birks, out o'er a little lin,
The water fa's and makes a singin' din;
A pool breast-deep beneath as clear as glass,
Kisses with easy whirls the bord'ring grass:
We'll end our washing while the morning's cool;
And when the day grows het, we'll to the pool,
There wash oursells—'tis healthfu' now in May,
And sweetly cauler on sae warm a day."

The Lowland burn here appears lovingly in poetry. Montgomery had noted it in its more forcible features; but here it is taken to the heart, as a thing to be affectionately pictured and cherished as a familiar inspiration. It is fused, moreover, with simple everyday feeling, which is yet one of the primary human emotions.

In Act II., Scene 1, the Prologue gives us a picture of a small farmhouse of last century, which almost makes one long for a turning back of the dial for a hundred and fifty years, and wish now there were a world of Glauds:—

"A snug thack-house, before the door a green;
Hens on the midden, ducks in dubs are seen:
On this side stands a barn, on that a byre;
A peat-stack joins, and forms a rural square.
The house is Glaud's;—there you may see him lean,
And to his divot-seat[1] invite his frien'."

[1] Turf-seat.

Again, in Act II., Scene 2, we have as Prologue:—

"The open field; a cottage in a glen;
An auld wife spinning at the sunny end.
At a small distance, by a blasted tree,
With faulded arms, and half-rais'd look, ye see
Bauldy his lane."

In Scene III., Prologue:—

"A green kail-yard; a little fount
Where water poplan[2] springs;
There sits a wife with wrinkled front,
And yet she spins and sings."

[2] Bubbling up.

These extracts show that we are now in a wholly new field of observation and description—the simple homely scenes and objects of everyday rural life—away from cities and the

artifice of man, in the free moorland air by the wimpling burn of the Lowlands. Ramsay felt with Virgil—

"Pallas, quas condidit arces
Ipsa colat; nobis placeant ante omnia sylvæ."

In his songs Ramsay is very unequal, being often merely sentimental and affected. But he emphasised, though he did not introduce into our Scottish songs of love, the courtship in the open air, with all its tender associations of natural scenery—hillside and wood, the water and the glen, the hawthorn and the gowan, and the notes of birds; and thus fused with the feeling for nature the emotion most sacred to lyrical poetry. This fusion has since his time become the almost universal characteristic of the Scottish love-songs, adding immensely to their charm.

The key-note of those songs is in such stanzas as these:—

"Oh, Katie, wilt thou gang wi' me,
And leave the dinsome toun a while?
The blossom's sprouting frae the tree,
And a' the simmer's gaun to smile.

* *Eclog.* II.

The mavis, nichtingale, and lark,
The bleeting lambs and whistling hynd,
In ilka[1] dale, green, shaw, and park,
Will nourish health and glad your mind.

[1] Every.

Sune as the clear gudeman o' day
Does bend[2] his morning draught o' dew,
We'll gae to some burn-side and play,
And gather flowers to busk your brow.
We'll pou the daisies on the green,
The lucken-gowans frae the bog;
Between hands, now and then, we'll lean,
And sport upon the velvet fog."[3]

[2] Drink, quaff.

[3] Moss.

Ramsay's feeling for scenery is very good up to its limit; but the sterner side of Scottish nature he neither knew nor felt. Ramsay was quite at home by the side of the trotting wimpling burnie; he would hardly have followed it with equal delight to its wild source—through, say, the peat-hags of Winterhope to where the crags beetle and the mists hover over the dark grey waters of Loch Skene. The poet of the sweets of Habbie's How and the agreeable green slopes of the Pentlands would not have felt much inspiration from being

"alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him on the heights."

Well did Burns sum up the characteristics of Ramsay in those stanzas:—

"Thou paints auld Nature to the nines,
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;
Nae gowden stream thro' myrtles twines,
Where Philomel,
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,
Her griefs will tell!

In gowany glens thy burnie strays,
Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes;
Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes
Wi' hawthorns grey,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd lays
At close o' day."

This is true: though there was, indeed, in Ramsay just the lingering touch of the Philomel spirit,—the old conventional feigning,—yet the power and the soul of his poetry are to be found in an essentially direct feeling for the living people around him, and the world of nature which he saw and loved. And we should not

omit to notice that Ramsay gave most manly, and at the same time most pathetic, voice to that love of one's place of birth, and thence of country, which is so strong in the Scot, and which has grown in a great measure out of the scenery of the land and its associations. I refer, of course, to the touching strains of 'Lochaber no more'—

"Farewell to Lochaber, farewell to my Jean,
Where heartsome wi' thee I ha'e mony a day
been;
To Lochaber no more, to Lochaber no more,
We'll maybe return to Lochaber no more."

CHAPTER XIV.

MODERN PERIOD: JAMES THOMSON.

(1700–1748.)

We now come to one who abandoned wholly conventionalism, at least of feeling, mere book-reference and limited traditional view of nature, and for the first time, not only in Scottish but in British poetry, saw and felt the aspects of nature in all its moods, from the homely every-day sights and sounds, the gentle, the soft, and the simply beautiful, to the strange, the stern, and the wild—the whole progress of the varied year. A Scotsman did this; and he did it, as we shall see, through the strong impressions made on him in youth, and carried to a southern clime from his native streams and hills.

James Thomson (1700-1748) was a son of

the Scottish manse. He was born at Ednam, in Roxburghshire, near where the Eden joins the Tweed, on the 11th September 1700. His father was the Rev. Thomas Thomson, minister of the parish. In November of the same year the father was translated to the parish of Southdean, high up in the valley of the Jed, where the road passes upwards to the Reid Swire,—the *col* or neck of the Carter Fell,—and then leads down Redesdale by Whitelee to Otterbourn. On the right side of the road up the Jed water is a very old churchyard, where it is said the Scots, coming from the fight with Percy, buried some of their dead, after carrying them, along with their gallant dead leader, the Douglas, up from the blood-stained bent of Otterbourn.

Thomson as a boy was educated in the grammar-school of Jedburgh, then housed in a portion of its old and stately abbey. At the age of fifteen he went as a student to the University of Edinburgh, with a view to study for the Church. There he made the acquaintance of a fellow-student—David Malloch—finally calling himself Mallet, who to a considerable extent influenced the future career of

Thomson, and was himself to be known in the world of letters.

Thomson was fourteen years younger than Allan Ramsay. But he was a student in the University from 1715, and for some years afterwards. Allan Ramsay's occasional broadsheets were hawked about the streets in those years; and probably the young student would be interested enough to make a purchase now and again. We can fancy young Thomson giving a copper for Allan's last! In 1725, having abandoned the idea of entering the Church, Thomson left Edinburgh for London. It is clear, however, that the publication of 'The Gentle Shepherd' could not have been the means of drawing Thomson's attention to outward nature, for before 1725 a series of pieces, afterwards fused together to form 'Winter,' were already completed. It was at Mallet's suggestion in London that Thomson arranged the fragments, and published the composition under the title of 'Winter' in 1726. Thus, quite independently of Ramsay, Thomson's love and feeling for nature had quietly grown up and developed when a boy on the slopes of the Cheviots and the braes of the Jed.

'In fact, the first form of 'The Seasons' may be found in a juvenile poem of Thomson's, written before he was twenty, entitled 'A Country Life.' And the idea of 'Winter,' the first composed and published of the 'Seasons,' was first suggested to him by a poem of his early friend, and we may say literary helper, the accomplished Riccartoun, who was minister of Hobkirk, near Southdean, and whom he used, while still at school, to visit. This was entitled 'A Winter's Day.' It was published in 1726 in Savage's 'Miscellany'; afterwards it appeared in 1740 in the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' "corrected by an eminent hand,"—supposed to be Mallet, who, with that unscrupulousness which characterised him, led people to infer that it was his own composition.* "In it," Thomson says, "are some masterly strokes that awakened me." Here are some of its lines:—

"Now, gloomy soul! look out—now comes thy turn;
With thee, behold all ravaged nature mourn;
Hail the dim empire of thy darling night,
That spreads low-shadowing o'er the vanquished light.

* See Robert Bell's edition of *The Seasons*, Preface.

Look out with joy; the ruler of the day,
Faint as thy hopes, emits a glittering ray:
Already exiled to the utmost sky,
Hither, oblique, he turns his clouded eye.
Lo! from the limits of the wintry pole,
Mountainous clouds, in loud confusion, roll:
In dismal pomp, now hovering on their way,
To a sick twilight they reduce the day.
And hark! imprisoned winds, broke loose, arise,
And roar their haughty triumph through the skies;
While the driven clouds, o'ercharged with floods of rain
And mingled lightning, burst upon the plain.

. . . . . .

Rough rugged rocks, wet marshes, ruined towers,
Bare trees, brown brakes, bleak heaths, and rushy moors,
Dread floods, huge cataracts, to my pleased eyes
(Now I can smile!) in wild disorder rise!
And now the various dreadfulness combined,
Black melancholy comes to doze my mind."

Any one who has lived on the southern uplands of Scotland will recognise at least the fidelity to fact of those lines, and they were

probably the accident which suggested to Thomson the theme of Winter for a poem, which he so splendidly developed.

As Thomson was not apparently influenced in his early impulse to nature by Allan Ramsay, neither does he seem to have drawn anything from the floating ballad literature of the Borders, with which he must have been more or less familiar in its oral form. There is no trace of feeling for romantic incident in his verse of the kind known to these ballads. Their incidental references to scenery, moreover, have little in common with his point of view. In his descriptions, besides, the landscape is not distinctively Scottish in its main features. Now and again in 'Spring,' 'Summer,' and 'Autumn,' there occur lines which could have been written only from memory of the braes of the Jed and the plains of the Tweed; and the descriptions in 'Winter' are obviously reminiscences of the rude sweep of the snowstorm, which, as a boy, he had watched on the slopes of the Carter Fell and the Cheviots. His descriptions, as a rule, take in English scenery; they are indeed somewhat generalised pictures. But the whole conception and working out of 'The Seasons' mark

Thomson as a man of singularly original powers. He may not have directly got very much from the scenery amid which he lived as a boy; but it is clear, I think, that had he been brought up simply by the Thames at Richmond, where he chiefly lived in his later days, and never known the wide range of moorland and mountain view, the varied expanse of heaven and moving cloud, which crown the hill-country by the water-heads of the Jed and the Rule, we should never have had that wide sweep of vision and fresh freedom of handling the aspects of nature which characterise 'The Seasons.' This, in fact, we may infer from his own words:—

"Pleased have I, in my cheerful morn of life,
When nursed by careless solitude I lived,
And sung of Nature with unceasing joy,—
Pleased have I wandered through your rough
domain;
Trod the pure virgin-snows, myself as pure;
Heard the winds roar, and the big torrent burst;
Or seen the deep fermenting tempest brewed
In the grim evening sky. Thus passed the time,
Till through the lucid chambers of the South
Looked out the joyous Spring,—looked out and
smiled."

Thomson was characterised by an extremely intense and pure love of the aspects of nature —simply as they appear to the senses and to that form of imagination which flows into the intuitions of sense, and makes for the poetic soul the constructions, the unified scenes, of the outer world. This was the sphere of his delight—a sphere in which no one before his time had equally rejoiced. It touched him on every side, from the fresh green and the glints of spring, through summer glory, autumn's splendid decay, and winter's sweep and storm. No man ever loved object or person with greater passion than Thomson did the passing, thrilling aspects of earth and sky. He did not seek nature for purposes of illustration, or enhancement of incident, character, or story; he did not find in it the symbolism which others, more especially Wordsworth, have found, though he was essentially a pious and reverential worshipper of the outward world as the manifestation of a Power—high, supreme, beneficent—which he believed lay within it and beyond. Yet he loved this sense-world with a supreme love:—

"I care not, Fortune, what you me deny;
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace,
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns, by living streams at eve;
Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
And I their toys to the great children leave;
Of fancy, reason, virtue, naught can me bereave."

With all this passion, he was a keen, careful, accurate observer, as most true poets are. He had a fresh eye and an open heart. He has seen and noted aspects of the world of nature, in the interest of the higher imagination, and as the matter of æsthetical delight and enjoyment, which had not been seen or felt in any way before his time.

And while he was true to the order of occurrences and the successive aspects of a scene, he very seldom fails to give them definiteness and complete unity in his picturing. You feel that the man saw what he describes, that it was then and there for him; and you feel also, as

a rule, that he has not departed from the real presence of a given time and space of observation. This remark applies, I think, with especial force to the scenes of his 'Winter.' In the poems on the other seasons, you may, as seems to me, detect what might be called "generalised" pictures—that is, pictures which do not quite connect themselves with the features of this or that locality, which could never have been taken up in one time or place, and which hover, as it were, between the indefinitely true and the really typical. For while truth to nature does not necessarily imply simple truth to fact, it always implies truth of possible experience at a given time, in a given season, and a definite space.

One great peculiarity and merit of Thomson is, that he was the first poet in the English language who had the insight and the courage to select for the main, even exclusive, theme of a large, continuous, and complete poem, the aspects of the world of nature. The interest of the poem lies entirely in the delineation of this world, not in any degree in story or incident of human life interwoven with it. His episodes of life are simply by the way, and far

from being the best parts of his work. It was a bold design, well and successfully carried out, and most beneficial for the interests of literature itself, for it came at a time when poetic art was fast falling under sickly sentimentalism,—artificialism in manner, style, and feeling. Thomson's 'Seasons' served to freshen the springs of British poetry: its influence was speedily felt in last century; it has been powerful directly and indirectly down to our own day. In this Thomson asserted his individualism, in revolt from the canons of art accepted at the time.

"As to description," says Gray, "I have always thought that it made the most graceful ornament of poetry, but never ought to make the subject." That was written in the narrowness of the conventional spirit of the eighteenth century; it was not worthy of Gray himself; it was falsified by his own letters, in substance more poetical than most of his poems; and it is ludicrous in the light of the writings of Thomson, Dyer, Cowper, and Wordsworth, to say nothing of many lesser men. But description is not truly description when it is merely an enumeration, even artistically done; it is the true rendering, not only of what appears to eye

or ear, but of what that teaches the soul; what traces there are of the analogue of man in the outward world, and what of the supreme overshadowing power. Description of nature taken in its integrity has "ornament" for the very least of its uses. Its function is to touch, to refine, awe, and purify; to be the teacher and daily companion of the inmost and tenderest part of the man. If Gray had understood this, or known the "description" which is description, he, with his meditative soul, would never have written such a sentence.

Thomson's style has met with severe criticism. We hear pretty constantly of his "heavy monotonous periods," "false ornaments," "tumid expressions." It is true that his English is not simple; that he is not free from conventionalisms in expression, and even in incident and episode. But we forget that English was not his native language — that to a Scotsman one hundred and fifty years ago English was a foreign language to be learned, very much as any other foreign tongue was to be acquired— that no one in Scotland spoke it in Thomson's time, and that very few indeed could write it. The persistent attempts which Thomson made

to correct the heaviness, the book-gotten epithets, of his 'Seasons,' shows clearly his consciousness of his imperfections; and if he did not rise to the purest English, it was because no one in his time wrote it simply, or without a predominating mixture of long-syllabled classicalisms. Nothing is so common in these days as that unhistorical criticism which, destitute of imagination, simply judges a man from the standpoint of the present. Yet doubtless had the medium through which Thomson's ardent feeling for nature was given to the world been simpler, less pompous, more transparent, his own repute and his power for true good would have been immensely enhanced.

In 'Spring:'—

"O come! and while the rosy-footed May
Steals blushing on, together let us tread
The morning dews, and gather in their prime
Fresh-blooming flowers. . . .

. . . . . .

See, where the winding vale its lavish stores,
Irriguous, spreads. See how the lily drinks
The latent rill, scarce oozing through the grass,
Of growth luxuriant; or the humid bank,

In fair profusion, decks. Long let us walk,
Where the breeze blows from yon extended field
Of blossomed beans. Arabia cannot boast
A fuller gale of joy than, liberal, thence
Breathes through the sense, and takes the ravished soul.
Nor is the mead unworthy of thy foot,
Full of fresh verdure, and unnumbered flowers,
The negligence of Nature, wide and wild;
Where, undisguised by mimic art, she spreads
Unbounded beauty to the roving eye.
Here their delicious task the fervent bees,
In swarming millions, tend: around, athwart,
Through the soft air, the busy nations fly,
Cling to the bud, and, with inserted tube,
Suck its pure essence, its ethereal soul;
And oft, with bolder wing, they soaring dare
The purple heath, or where the wild thyme grows,
And yellow load them with the luscious spoil."

This passage contains, I rather think, the first reference to the heather — "the purple heath"—in our poetry.* And the lines may have been in the mind of Wordsworth when he wrote:—

* Ramsay (1729) has:—"Hills with purple heather smile."

"Bees that soar for bloom
High as the highest Peaks of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in fox-glove bells."

The approach of Spring with its showers is thus finely told:—

"Gradual sinks the breeze
Into a perfect calm, that not a breath
Is heard to quiver through the closing woods,
Or rustling turn the many-twinkling leaves
Of aspen tall. The uncurling floods, diffused
In glassy breadth, seem, through delusive lapse,
Forgetful of their course. 'Tis silence all,
And pleasing expectation. Herds and flocks
Drop the dry sprig, and, mute-imploring, eye
The falling verdure. Hushed in short suspense,
The plumy people streak their wings with oil,
To throw the lucid moisture trickling off,
And wait the approaching sign, to strike at once
Into the general choir. Even mountains, vales,
And forests seem impatient to demand
The promised sweetness. . . .
. . . . . .
At last,
The clouds consign their treasures to the fields,
And, softly shaking on the dimpled pool
Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow

In large effusion o'er the freshened world.
The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard
By such as wander through the forest-walks,
Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves."

One of Thomson's most perfect pictures is that of a summer morning. It illustrates beautifully the principle of gradual disclosure in description:—

"With quickened step
Brown night retires: young day pours in apace,
And opens all the lawny prospect wide.
The dripping rock, the mountain's misty-top,
Swell on the sight, and brighten with the dawn.
Blue, through the dusk, the smoking currents shine;
And from the bladed field the fearful hare
Limps awkward; while along the forest glade
The wild deer trip, and often turning gaze
At early passenger. Music awakes
The native voice of undissembled joy;
And thick around the woodland hymns arise."

Sunset on a summer evening has some striking features. The sun

"dips his orb;
Now half immersed; and now a golden curve
Gives one bright glance, then total disappears.

. . . . . .

Confessed from yonder slow-extinguished clouds,
All ether softening, sober evening takes
Her wonted station in the middle air;
A thousand shadows at her beck. First this
She sends on earth; then that of deeper dye
Steals soft behind; and then a deeper still,
In circle following circle, gathers round,
To close the face of things. A fresher gale
Begins to wave the wood, and stir the stream,
Sweeping with shadowy gust the fields of corn;
While the quail clamours for his running mate.

. . . . . .

Among the crooked lanes, on every hedge,
The glow-worm lights his gem; and through the dark
A moving radiance twinkles. Evening yields
The world to night; not in her winter robe
Of massy Stygian woof, but loose-arrayed
In mantle dun. A faint erroneous ray,
Glanced from the imperfect surfaces of things,
Flings half an image on the straining eye;
While wavering woods, and villages, and streams,

And rocks, and mountain-tops, that long retained
The ascending gleam, are all one swimming scene,
Uncertain if beheld. Sudden to heaven
Thence weary vision turns; where, leading soft
The silent hours of love, with purest ray
Sweet Venus shines; and from her genial rise,
When daylight sickens till it springs afresh,
Unrivalled reigns, the fairest lamp of night."

This shows wonderfully accurate and minute observation, and great power in picturing, though the style is hardly distinguishable from prose, unless from its division into verses. "The glow-worm lights his gem," and "daylight sickens," are very good examples of Thomson's fresh and felicitous diction. The latter, indeed, may have suggested it to Wordsworth in the powerful line:—

"Till the stars sicken at the day of doom."

The picture of Autumn is true and pathetic:—

"The pale descending year, yet pleasing still,
A gentler mood inspires; for now the leaf
Incessant rustles from the mournful grove;
Oft startling such as, studious, walk below,

And slowly circles through the waving air.
But should a quicker breeze amid the boughs
Sob, o'er the sky the leafy deluge streams;
Till choked, and matted with the dreary shower,
The forest walks, at every rising gale,
Roll wide the withered waste, and whistle bleak.
Fled is the wasted verdure of the fields;
And, shrunk into their beds, the flowery race
Their sunny robes resign. . . .

. . . . . .

The western sun withdraws the shortened day,
And humid evening, gliding o'er the sky,
In her chill progress, to the ground condensed
The vapour throws. Where creeping waters ooze,
Where marshes stagnate, and where rivers wind,
Cluster the rolling fogs, and swim along
The dusky-mantled lawn. Meanwhile the moon,
Full-orbed, and breaking through the scattered clouds,
Shows her broad visage in the crimsoned east.
Turned to the sun direct, her spotted disk,
Where mountains rise, umbrageous dales descend,
And caverns deep, as optic tube descries,
A smaller earth, gives us his blaze again,

Void of its flame, and sheds a softer day.
Now through the passing cloud she seems to stoop,
Now up the pure cærulean rides sublime.
Wide the pale deluge floats, and streaming mild
O'er the skied mountain to the shadowy vale,
While rocks and floods reflect the quivering gleam,
The whole air whitens with a boundless tide
Of silver radiance trembling round the world."

This passage shows Thomson in his weakness and in his strength. The description is of the most literal kind—a noting simply of what the eye may observe, but the eye of a poet. Then it is made up from many scenes, not extracted, as it were, as an essence from one striking vision, and thus rendered typical of many; it is rather a generalised and adapted picture. It is marred, moreover, by explanations of how certain of the features arise, are seen, and may be seen. But the last seven lines contain as true, characteristic, and noble a delineation as can be found in the English, or, I believe, in any language. The moon seeming to stoop through the passing

clouds, then riding clear and sublime; the light streaming over "the skied mountain;" the gleam of rock and flood; and, finally, the "boundless tide of silver radiance trembling round the world,"—are elements of a picture complete in the beauty of its impressiveness and unity.

His lines on angling show distinct reminiscences of his early youth, and of Scottish scenery. Thus:—

"Now when the first foul torrent of the brooks,
Swelled with the vernal rains, is ebbed away;
And, whitening, down their mossy-tinctured stream,
Descends the billowy foam; now is the time,
While yet the dark-brown water aids the guile,
To tempt the trout."

Again—

"High to their fount, this day, amid the hills
And woodlands warbling round, trace up the brooks."

The same is true of other pictures, and numberless touches scattered over 'The Seasons.' Thus:—

"From the moist meadow to the withered hill,
Led by the breeze, the vivid verdure runs."

On this, Principal Shairp remarks: "That 'withered hill'! Who that has ever looked on the mountains in March, just before the first finger of spring has touched them, but will recognise the appropriateness of that epithet for their wan, bleached, decayed aspect?" * So Hamilton of Bangour, referring to Winter, says:—

"Cast up thy eyes, how bleak and bare
He wanders on the tops of Yair.
Behold, his footsteps dire are seen
Confest, on many a withering green."

Thus, in the same spirit of faithfulness to Border scenery, Thomson loved

"the mountain-brow,
Where sits the shepherd on the grassy turf,
Inhaling, healthful, the descending sun.
Around him feeds his many-bleating flock,
Of various cadence; and his sportive lambs,
This way and that convolved, in friskful glee
Their frolics play."

* *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, pp. 187, 188.

His touches of Winter come home to one with a peculiar truthfulness and vividness:—

"Along the woods, along the moorish fens,
Sighs the sad Genius of the coming storm;
And up among the loose disjointed cliffs,
And fractured mountain's wilds, the brawling brook,
And cave, presageful, send a hollow moan,
Resounding long in listening Fancy's ear."

This could have been written only in presence of, or from, a memory of the mountains of Scotland. So—

"At last the roused-up river pours along:
Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes,
From the rude mountain, and the mossy wild,
Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far;
Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads,
Calm, sluggish, silent; till again, constrained
Between two meeting hills, it bursts away,
Where rocks and woods o'erhang the turbid stream:
There gathering triple force, rapid and deep,
It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through."

Thomson never saw anything in England to give him this; but any long winter day, when a boy, he might, and probably did, see it on the Jed or the Rule. Perhaps the helping, guiding friend of his youth, Riccartoun of Hobkirk, and he might have rejoiced in the spectacle together.

Thomson's delineation of the snowstorm has not been excelled for truth, power, and completeness of picturing:—

"The keener tempests rise; and fuming dun,
From all the livid east, or piercing north,
Thick clouds ascend, in whose capacious womb
A vapoury deluge lies, to snow congealed.
Heavy they roll their fleecy world along;
And the sky saddens with the gathered storm.
Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin wavering; till at last the flakes
Fall broad, and wide, and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherished fields
Put on their winter robe of purest white.
'Tis brightness all; save where the new snow melts
Along the mazy current. Low, the woods
Bow their hoar head; and, ere the languid Sun

Faint from the west emits his evening ray,
Earth's universal face, deep hid and chill,
Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. Drooping, the labourer-ox
Stands covered o'er with snow, and then demands
The fruit of all his toil. The fowls of Heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them."

Then follows the description of the robin, in his timid and gradually courageous approach to "the warm hearth" for food. After this, there is the picture of the shepherd struggling with, and finally succumbing to, the benumbing storm :—

"In his own loose-revolving fields, the swain
Disastered stands; sees other hills ascend,
Of unknown joyless brow, and other scenes,
Of horrid prospect, shog the trackless plain:
Nor finds the river, nor the forest, hid
Beneath the formless wild; but wanders on
From hill to dale, still more and more astray;
Impatient flouncing through the drifted heaps,

Stung with the thoughts of home: the thoughts
of home
Rush on his nerves, and call their vigour forth
In many a vain attempt. . . .
. . . . . .
While round him night resistless closes fast,
And every tempest, howling o'er his head,
Renders the savage wilderness more wild.
. . . . . .
. . . . . Down he sinks
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,
Mixed with the tender anguish Nature shoots
Through the wrung bosom of the dying man,
His wife, his children, and his friends unseen."

Never before was this pathetic incident of Scottish winter life set forth in poetry.

One other touch of Winter there is, and it is a fine one:—

"Muttering, the winds at eve, with blunted
point
Blow hollow-blustering from the south. Subdued,
The frost resolves into a trickling thaw.

Spotted the mountains shine; loose sleet descends,
And floods the country round. The rivers swell,
Of bonds impatient. Sudden from the hills,
O'er rocks and woods, in brown broad cataracts,
A thousand snow-fed torrents shoot at once;
And, where they rush, the wide-resounding plain
Is left one slimy waste."

In the 'Castle of Indolence'—the work of Thomson in the maturity of his powers, and in its English style much freer from alloy than his earlier writings—we find pictures of scenery wonderfully powerful in their idealisation, and charmingly musical.

Thus:—

"In lowly dale, fast by a river's side,
With woody hill o'er hill encompassed round,
A most enchanting wizard did abide,
Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found.
It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground:
And there a season atween June and May,
Half pranked with spring, with summer half imbrowned,
A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,
No living wight could work, ne carèd even for play.

Was nought around but images of rest:
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between;
And flowery beds, that slumbrous influence kest,[1]
From poppies breathed; and beds of pleasant green,
Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumbered glittering streamlets played,
And hurlèd everywhere their waters sheen;
That, as they bickered through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

. . . . . .

Full in the passage of the vale, above,
A sable, silent, solemn forest stood;
Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,
As Idlesse fancied in her dreaming mood:
And up the hills, on either side, a wood
Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood;
And where this valley winded out below,
The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

[1] Cast.

A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky."

On the walls of the castle:—

"Sometimes the pencil, in cool airy halls,
Bade the gay bloom of vernal landscapes rise,
Or autumn's varied shades imbrown the walls:
Now the black tempest strikes the astonished eyes;
Now down the steep the flashing torrent flies;
The trembling sun now plays o'er ocean blue,
And now rude mountains frown amid the skies;
Whate'er Lorraine light-touched with softening hue,
Or savage Rosa dashed, or learned Poussin drew.

. . . . . .

Near the pavilions where we slept, still ran
Soft-tinkling streams, and dashing waters fell,
And sobbing breezes sighed, and oft began
(So worked the wizard) wintry storms to swell,
As heaven and earth they would together mell:[1]

[1] Mingle.

At doors and windows threatening seemed to
call
The demons of the tempest, growling fell,
Yet the least entrance found they none at all;
Whence sweeter grew our sleep, secure in mossy
hall."

This picture, taken as a whole, is of the most finished kind. The ideal sought to be portrayed is brought out with complete unity of impression, every feature being subordinated to the total harmonious effect. For richness, and sensuous luxury of imagery, there is nothing to surpass it in the language.

At this stage some people may ask, Is there any practical moral lesson to come out of nature feeling and nature regard, in its comprehensive sweep, as a man like Thomson felt and depicted it? I do not admit the bare relevancy of this question. In itself, I hold the nature feeling to be a good and a blessing—a means of culture, refinement, and the handmaid of highest worship. But there is one moral and practical lesson, among many, which a considerate and loving regard for nature teaches us—a lesson, too, which we may learn from every true-

hearted poet of the outward world, in its full range of insentient and sentient objects. No man can be drawn to the varied aspects of the outward world without rising to a sympathy and tender love for the creatures of the wilds—of beast and bird, deer in the forest and birds in the air, and all the gentle living beings which rejoice in nature's care, and are sustained by her free bounteousness. There is not one of the great poets, in the whole range of Scottish and English literature, who has cared for nature, whose heart has not been open to this tenderness and sympathy. To look only to Scotland, we find the feeling active in Gawin Douglas, in Thomson, in Burns, in the Ettrick Shepherd. It has found, perhaps, its loftiest expression in Wordsworth, in 'Hart Leap Well,' and in other of his poems:—

"Gray-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:
This Beast not unobserved by nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,

Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom He loves.

. . . . . .

One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals;
Never to mix our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

But it is put by Thomson, in more than one passage, in a way which shows how truly it came home to his heart. Evidently a skilled angler in his youth in the Lowland waters and burns, to which his description specially applies, he tells us withal:—

"But let not on thy hook the tortured worm,
Convulsive twist in agonising folds,
Which, by rapacious hunger swallowed deep,
Gives, as you tear it from the bleeding breast
Of the weak, helpless, uncomplaining wretch,
Harsh pain and horror to the tender hand."

Again:—

"If yet too young, and easily deceived,
A worthless prey scarce bends your pliant rod;

Him, piteous of his youth and the short space
He has enjoyed the vital light of heaven,
Soft disengage, and back into the stream
The speckled captive throw."

In the midst of a boasted civilisation based chiefly on the perfection of machinery, and a popular sermonising instruction which seldom, if ever, touches such a sentiment, we need much the lessons of tenderness to be learned from the poets of nature.

It was to be expected that the example and the influence of Thomson, through his fresh dealing with nature, should spread over the English poets of the time. Unquestionably it did—more a great deal than has been actually acknowledged by critics and historians. The first, perhaps, on whom this influence was manifested was the sensitive and fine-souled Collins, whose new utterances were met, and unfortunately repressed, by the *ex cathedrâ* hack critics of the time, as, a century later, the same tribe crushed the fine spirit of Keats. How thoroughly one sympathises with Shelley, in his preface to the immortal 'Adonais'!—

"As to 'Endymion,' was it a poem, whatever

might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated with various degrees of complacency and panegyric 'Paris,' 'Woman,' and a 'Syrian Tale,' and a long list of the illustrious obscure? . . . Miserable man! You, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none." * The same brutality that was used to Keats had before been the experience of Collins. Unfortunately, that peculiar sensitiveness which attaches to the poetic temperament was in neither case counterbalanced by a scorn of the paltry, ignorant, and mean, or by that resolute conviction and trust in one's own power and function in the world which nerved the soul of Wordsworth to bear and to defy nearly forty years of obloquy and purblind criticism, proceeding from the accepted and shallow souls of the current prints.

Collins yet carried the spirit of Thomson into British poetry. Collins (1720-1756) was the friend of Thomson, and of Home, the author of 'Douglas.' He had strong lean-

* Shelley, *Preface to Adonais.*

ings to the poetry of Scotland. The Ode on 'The Superstitions of the Highlands' shows this influence. "In this ode," says Principal Shairp, "he entered with a deeper, more imaginative insight into the weird and wild superstitions of the Gael than any Scottish poet had as yet done." And the power of Thomson is seen in the fresh, truthful, literal delineations of scenery through his poems, utterly different from the conventional mixtures of the times. Once even in his early days he had hoped to visit Scotland, and that—

"The time shall come when I perhaps may
tread
Your lowly glens o'erhung with spreading bloom;
Or o'er your stretching heaths by Fancy led;
Or o'er your mountains creep, in awful gloom.
Then will I dress once more the faded flower
Where Jonson sat in Drummond's classic shade;
Or crop from Teviotdale each lyric flower,
And mourn on Yarrow's banks where Willie's
laid."

Collins has spoken the very spirit of Thomson in the stanza of the 'Ode on Evening':—

"But when chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods."

Seldom has finer ode on the death of a friend and a poet been penned than these lines of Collins on Thomson:—

"In yonder grave a Druid lies,
Where slowly winds the stealing wave!
The year's best sweets shall duteous rise,
To deck its poet's sylvan grave!

In yon deep bed of whispering reeds
His airy harp shall now be laid,
That he, whose heart in sorrow bleeds,
May love through life the pleasing shade.

The maids and youths shall linger here,
And, while its sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in pity's ear
To hear the woodland pilgrim's knell.

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore,
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest;
And oft suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest!

And oft, as Ease and Health retire
To breezy lawn, or forest deep,
The friend shall view yon whitening spire,
And 'mid the varied landscape weep.

But thou, who own'st that earthly bed,
Ah! what will every dirge avail;
Or tears, which love and pity shed,
That mourn beneath the gliding sail?

Yet lives there one whose heedless eye
Shall scorn thy pale shrine glimmering near?
With him, sweet bard, may fancy die,
And joy desert the blooming year.

But thou, lorn stream, whose sullen tide
No sedge-crowned sisters now attend,
Now waft me from the green hill's side,
Whose cold turf hides the buried friend!

And see, the fairy valleys fade,
Dun night has veiled the solemn view!
Yet once again, dear parted shade,
Meek nature's child, again adieu!

The genial hearts, assigned to bless
Thy life, shall mourn thy early doom!
Their hinds and shepherd-girls shall dress,
With simple hands, thy rural tomb.

Long, long thy stone and pointed clay
Shall melt the musing Briton's eyes:
'Oh! vales, and wild woods,' shall he say,
'In yonder grave your Druid lies!'"

The significance of this ode lies in its recognition of the new power in British poetry which flowed from the son of the minister of Southdean, in the Cheviots. The influence of Thomson is seen not only on Collins, but on Gray, Goldsmith, and Cowper, on Clare, Bloomfield, and Crabbe. More recently there are indications of the power of Thomson on Wordsworth. This is evident, notwithstanding the greatly higher reach of the latter poet in many ways,—in the spirit of close and loving observation of the simple everyday aspects of things; and not less in the distinct echoes of thoughts, epithets, and lines which for the first time in our poetry are to be found in "the sweet-souled poet of 'The Seasons.'"

CHAPTER XV.

MODERN PERIOD: FROM ALLAN RAMSAY TO JAMES MACPHERSON.

(1758–1796.)

THROUGH the influence mainly of Ramsay, aided in some cases by personal acquaintance with him, we have a line of Scottish poets who were drawn to rural and pastoral scenery,—especially that of the Tweed and its tributaries. These singers were also to a considerable extent under the power of the gradual rediscovery or revelation of the Scottish songs and ballads, which had been floating in oral tradition, and which were now beginning to be published for the first time, partly by Watson, and partly by Ramsay himself. Before the close of the century, to meet the increasing public taste for them,

there had appeared the collections of Bishop Percy (1765), Herd (1769), Evans, Pinkerton, Ritson, and Johnson. In 1802-3 appeared the most significant of the whole in the three volumes of 'The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' by Walter Scott. Influenced by Ramsay and the early flow of this new tide of poetry, were William Hamilton of Bangour (1704-1754), David Mallet (1700-1765), Tobias George Smollett (1721-1771), William Julius Mickle, son of the minister of Langholm (1734-1788), Michael Bruce (1746-1767), John Logan (1748-1788), Miss Jean Elliott, Mrs Cockburn, Sir Gilbert Elliott, and to a considerable extent Robert Fergusson (1751-1774). To these should be added, as coming under the influence more especially of Thomson, John Armstrong (1709-1779), son of the minister of Castleton; and the English poet, John Langhorne (1735-1779).

In the old ballads generally, and especially as known to those writers, the references to scenery are incidental. There is often the evidence of a deep feeling for the haugh, the hill, and the water, and a vivid reference to it, as a setting for incident or groundwork of the

story. There is often, indeed, the real fusion of scenery and emotion; but there is no pausing in the older songs and ballads on the scene for its own sake. The interest of the older minstrel is mainly in incident,—personal or national,—in weird fancy, or in the love feeling. In none of the writers now specified is there more than appears in the older singers. They have references to scenes and natural features, but they are given simply as illustrating or enhancing the progress of the story, or the kind of emotion portrayed.*

The power of these old ballads lay mainly in this, that they revealed heroic life and incident, the workings of simple primary human emotion, —love, joy, grief, and sorrow,—personal heroism, and deep down in the heart of all nationalism, patriotism even in a local garb. The places of the incidents, the very names of the actors of the verses, took the imagination out from cities and city manners, and all their conventional associations, to the glens, the haughs, the burns, the waters, the hills and the moorlands

* For those who desire to follow this branch of the subject through its details, I may refer to chapter xiii. of *The History and Poetry of the Scottish Border*: 1878.

of the broad scenery of Lowland Scotland. It was thus people were led to think of this scenery, its outlines and its details, in a way never suggested before. And although the ballads did not themselves reveal all the wealth and power that lay in the moorland, the glen, and the hill, they at least led the way to a knowledge of it,—to a brooding and pondering over it,—which has issued in the wide free sympathy for nature, shared in these days by all minds except the Philistine, the coarse and unrefinable.

The first name of note in the early part of last century among those who carried the pastoral spirit to the district of the Tweed and its tributaries, is that of Robert Crawford (1695-1732), a cadet of the family of Drumsoy, in Renfrewshire. He is the author of the songs entitled 'Tweedside,' 'Bush aboon Traquair,' 'Leader Haughs and Yarrow,' and several other kindred strains, contributed to Ramsay's 'Tea-Table Miscellany.' "The finest of Crawford's songs is, no doubt, 'Tweedside.' His general style partakes a good deal of the affectation and artificial mannerism of the time; but in 'Tweedside' he has deeply felt and yielded to

the freshness and truth of the nature which he seeks to describe. We feel that he has caught the characteristic features of the valley of the Tweed, and pictured for us a glorious spring-day, in which birds sing, and the river glides brightly and gently, and the primroses spring in the woods, and the lambs bleat pathetically on the hills, and the whole air is filled with peace and love and gladness."

"What beauties does Flora disclose!
How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed!
Yet Mary's, still sweeter than those,
Both nature and fancy exceed.

No daisy, nor sweet blushing rose,
Not all the gay flowers of the field,
Not Tweed, gliding gently through those,
Such beauty and pleasure does yield.

The warblers are heard in the grove,
The linnet, the lark, and the thrush;
The blackbird, and sweet cooing dove,
With music enchant every bush.

- *Border History and Poetry*, p. 447.

Come, let us go forth to the mead,
Let us see how the primroses spring;
We'll lodge in some village on Tweed,
And love while the feathered folk sing.

. . . . . .

Say, charmer, where do thy flocks stray?
Oh! tell me at morn where they feed?
Shall I seek them on sweet winding Tay,
Or the pleasanter banks of the Tweed?"

Of the names now mentioned, William Hamilton of Bangour (1704-1754), of an old Ayrshire family, is best known by his 'Braes of Yarrow' —perhaps the earliest and certainly the unsurpassed modern outcome of that undercurrent of simple, sweetly mournful, and pathetic song, so especially associated in the past with the Vale of Yarrow. The interest of the piece is its simple yet tragic tale. This is set in the monotone of pathos which both nature and story have diffused over "the houms," "the dens," and the hills of the stream, which, more than any other in the land, may be said to reflect the sombre grey gleam of mediæval romance. Hamilton has touches, by the way, of the scenery. The refrain—

"Pu'ing the birks on the Braes of Yarrow"—

has an exquisite cadence and touching suggestion. And there are the stanzas—

"Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green
grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow bank the gowan,
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowan."

His picture of Tweedside undoubtedly suggested to Scott the description of the same in the introduction to Canto I. of Marmion, written at Ashestiel:—

"For see the summer posts away,
Sad emblem of our own decay.
Now Winter from the frozen north
Drives his iron chariot forth;
His grizzly hand in icy chains
Fair Tweda's silver flood constrains.
Cast up thy eyes, how bleak and bare
He wanders on the tops of Yair.
Behold, his footsteps dire are seen,
Confessed on many a withering green!"

This is how Sir Walter puts it:—

"No longer Autumn's glowing red
Upon our forest hills is shed;
No more beneath the evening beam
Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam;
Away hath passed the heather-bell
That bloomed so rich on Neidpath Fell;
Sallow his brow and russet bare
Are now the sister heights of Yair.
The sheep before the pinching heaven
To sheltered dale and down are driven,
Where yet some faded herbage pines,
Where yet a watery sunbeam shines."

Hamilton does not, however, abound in description. He was more a painter of manners, and a writer of love-songs of the courtly and fanciful style of Sir Robert Aytoun, and others of the Restoration type. Clearly, however, Hamilton had come to some extent under the peculiar influence of his friend Allan Ramsay.

Mallet's 'Birks of Invermay' and Smollett's 'Ode to Leven-Water' are both imbued with a fine feeling for Scottish scenery, but they need not here be quoted.

John Armstrong, M.D. (1709-1779), was the

son of the minister of Castleton, in Liddesdale. In his poem on 'The Art of Preserving Health' (1744), he recurs with feeling to the scenes of his youthful days on the banks of the Liddel:—

"Such
The Esk o'erhung with woods; and such the stream
On whose Arcadian banks I first drew air,
Liddel; till now except in Doric lays
Tuned to her murmurs by her love-sick swains,
Unknown in song, though not a purer stream,
Through meads more flowery, more romantic groves,
Rolls towards the western main. Hail sacred flood!
May still thy hospitable swains be blessed
In rural innocence; thy mountains still
Teem with the fleecy race; thy tuneful woods
For ever flourish; and thy vales look gay
With painted meadows and the golden grain!"

William Julius Mickle (1734-1788) was the son of the minister of Langholm. The translator of the 'Lusiad' of Camoens, he is also remembered as the author of 'Cumnor Hall'

and 'Eskdale Braes.' The first stanza of the former poem has the exquisite lines—

"The dews of summer night did fall;
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silvered the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby."

The lines in 'Eskdale Braes' referring to places known in his youth have some fine touches, suggesting that he had a far higher power in delineating scenery than he has actually displayed:—

"By the banks of the crystal-streamed Esk,
Where the Wauchope her yellow wave joins,
Where the lambkins on sunny braes bask,
And wild woodbine the shepherd's bower twines.

. . . . . .

No more from the echoes of Ewes,
His dog fondly barking I hear;
No more the tired lark he pursues,
And tells me his master draws near."

John Logan (1748-1788) was born at Soutra, in the parish of Fala, and thus almost a Borderer by birth, as he was in name. His somewhat

chequered course of life is well known. He was inducted to the second charge in South Leith in 1773. This he afterwards demitted, and went to London, where eventually he died. Michael Bruce and Logan were fellow-students in Edinburgh; and to Logan were committed certain manuscripts of Bruce. These formed the basis of the volume published in 1770, under the editorship of Logan, and entitled 'Poems on Several Occasions,' by Michael Bruce. The preface contains the announcement that, "to make up a miscellany, some poems, wrote by different authors, are inserted, all of them original, and none of them destitute of merit. The reader of taste will easily distinguish them from those of Mr Bruce without their being particularised by any mark." The 'Ode to the Cuckoo' formed the second last piece in the volume; and under cover of this announcement it was subsequently published by Logan as his own composition, in his small book of poems, in 1781. Whether Logan or Bruce was the author, it is really hard to determine. The 'Ode' itself is certainly one of the finest things in the English language. Scenery, music, touching pathos, are fused in a perfect way.

Logan came under the influence of the revived ballads, and he has given us one on 'The Braes of Yarrow.'

That he had a feeling for nature is shown by his poem, 'A Visit to the Country in Autumn.' It is a mingling of description and sentimental reflection, rather in the manner of the time:—

"'Tis past! No more the Summer blooms!
Ascending in the rear,
Behold congenial Autumn comes,
The Sabbath of the year!
What time thy holy whispers breathe
The pensive evening shade beneath,
And twilight consecrates the floods;
While Nature strips her garment gay,
And wears the vesture of decay,
O! let me wander through the sounding woods.

. . . . . .

While sad I ponder on the past,
The joys that must no longer last;
The wild flower strown on summer's bier,
The dying music of the grove,
And the last elegies of love,
Dissolve the soul, and draw the tender tear."

What follows is in the same strain. There certainly is nothing in this, or in Logan's other poems, to suggest the directness, the truth of observation, and the fine pathos of the 'Ode to the Cuckoo.'

It may be added that the stanza found in Logan's papers, and inserted as the penultimate in versions of 'The Cuckoo' after 1770, distinctly breaks the unity of feeling which otherwise pervades the poem. It is here printed within square brackets:—

"Hail, beauteous stranger of the wood!
Attendant on the spring!
Now heav'n repairs thy rural seat,
And woods thy welcome sing.

Soon as the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear:
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year?

Delightful visitant! With thee
I hail the time of flow'rs,
When heav'n is fill'd with music sweet
Of birds among the bow'rs.

The schoolboy, wand'ring in the wood
To pull the flow'rs so gay,*
Starts thy curious voice to hear,†
And imitates thy lay.

Soon as the pea puts on the bloom,
Thou fly'st thy vocal vale,
An annual guest, in other lands,
Another spring to hail.

Sweet bird! thy bow'r is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year!

[Alas! sweet bird! not so my fate;
Dark scowling skies I see,
Fast gathering round, and fraught with woe
And wintry years to me.]

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee:
We'd make, with social wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the spring."

* Later reading, "the primrose gay."
† "The new voice of spring."

That penult stanza suggests distinctly the kind of sentiment embodied in Logan's lines on 'Autumn.' The other stanzas and the whole feeling of the piece have much more analogy with Bruce's 'Elegy' than with anything we have of Logan's.

The impulse to pastoral and pathetic song of which we now speak may be said to have culminated in two poetesses, who have given us two immortal lyrics, both fused with the spirit of the Border scenery. Indirect, no doubt, the influence is; but it is there all the same — pervading the whole ballad, so that were it withdrawn the soul of the song would cease to be. These are the two ballads entitled, 'The Flowers of the Forest'—the one by Jean Elliott (1727-1805), the third daughter of Sir Gilbert Elliott, the second Baronet of Minto, and Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland; the other by Alison Rutherford (1712-1794), daughter of Robert Rutherford of Fernilee, on the Tweed. She became the wife of Patrick Cockburn, Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland and a son of Cockburn of Ormiston. Both ballads are exquisite; perhaps that

of Miss Elliott is the most suffused with local spirit and allusion :—

" I've heard them liltin' at the ewe-milkin',
Lasses a-liltin' before the dawn of day;
But now they are moanin' on ilka green loanin';
The Flowers o' the Forest are a' wede away."

In Mrs Cockburn's song we have a fine and characteristic reference to the Tweed, such as she may have often noted by Fernilee :—

" I've seen the morning
With gold the hills adorning,
And loud tempests storming, before the mid-day;
I've seen Tweed's siller streams,
Glittering in the sunny beams,
Grow drumly and dark as they row'd on their way."

The influence of Allan Ramsay's pastoral was not confined to the south of Scotland. The spirit of it quickened the heart of Alexander Ross (1699 - 1784); the simple, manly, and modest schoolmaster of Lochlee, up in the strath of the Forfar North Esk, and led him to depict the rural life there in his 'Helenore,

or the Fortunate Shepherdess.' 'Helenore,' along with a few other poems, was published at Aberdeen in 1768, very much at the suggestion of Beattie, who was then Professor in Marischal College.

"Since Allan's [1] death, naebody cared
For anes to speer [2] how Scotia fared;
Nor plack [3] nor thristled turnee [4] wared,
To quench her drouth;
For, frae the cottar to the laird,
We a' rin south." *

[1] Allan Ramsay.
[2] Inquire.
[3] Scottish copper coin —$\frac{1}{4}$ of an English penny.
[4] Inferior coin circulated by the Earl of Stirling, equivalent to two pennies Scots money.

Ross has interwoven with the narrative of his poem brief but graphic pictures of scenery, chiefly of the softer parts of the strath and river, such as he observed in the Esk. There is no trace in him of any feeling for the mountains and the broken and romantic glens towards the head of the valley; rather, they are referred to as seldom visited, and hard to climb. He introduces the tale thus:—

"Now Flaviana was the country's name,
That aye that bonny water-side did claim

* Beattie, *Epistle to Mr Alexander Ross.*

Frae yellow sands that trindled down the same.
The fouks[1] were wealthy, store[2] was a' their stock;
Wi' this, but little cunzie,[3] did they trock;[4]
Frae 'mang the beasts his honour got his fa',[5]
And got but little siller, or nane ava.[6]
The water feckly[7] on a level sled,[8]
Wi' little din, but couthy[9] what it made.
On ilka[10] side the trees grew thick and strang,
And wi' the birds they a' were in a sang:
On ev'ry side, a full bow-shot and mair,
The green was even, gowany, and fair;
With easy sklent,[11] on ev'ry hand the braes,
To right well up, wi' scatter'd busses[12] raise:
Wi' goats and sheep aboon, and ky[13] below,
The bonny braes a' in a swarm did go.
Nae property these honest shepherds pled;[14]
All kept alike, and all in common fed."

[1] Folks.
[2] Store of sheep and cattle.
[3] Coinage, money.
[4] Traffic.
[5] Fall to him as portion, rent.
[6] At all.
[7] For the most part.
[8] Slid.
[9] Pleasing.
[10] Each.
[11] Slant, slope.
[12] Bushes.
[13] Cows.
[14] Laid claim to.

Lindy, the shepherd, had been carried off by "kettrins" or Highland reivers; and Nory, his sweetheart, in love's despair, took to the hills in search of him. This leads the poet to say:—

"Ne'er afore, by lang twa miles and mair,
Had errands led her through the glens to fare.

On ilka hand the hills were stay[1] and steep,
And sud[2] she tak them, she behoved to creep;
Baith wit and will in her together strave,[3]
And she's in swither[4] how she shall behave.
The fear o' Lindy wad na let her turn,
The frightful craigs and mountains gar'd[5] her mourn."

[1] Hard to climb. [2] Should. [3] Strove. [4] Doubt. [5] Caused.

When on the top of the heights—

"about she spies,
And, lo! beneath a bonnie burnie lies,
Out through the mist atweesh[6] her and the sun,
That glanced and shined in ilka pool and lyn.
A hail hauf mile she had at least to gang,
Through birns,[7] and pikes,[8] and scrabs,[9] and heather lang."

[6] Between.
[7] Scorched stems of heather. [8] Short withered heather. [9] Stumps or roots of heather.

Nory toils on bravely:—

"Now very sair the sun began to beat,
And she is like to sconfice[10] wi' the heat;
The summer cauts[11] were trembling here and there,
And clouds of midges dancing i' the air!
The streams of sweat and tears through ither ran
Down Nory's cheeks, and she to fag began:

[10] Be suffocated, stifled. [11] Shimmering heated air.

Wi' wae, and faut,[1] and meethness[2] of the day,
Sae sair beset she was, that down she lay.
For her gueed[3] luck, a wee bit aff the paid,[4]
Grew there a tree, with branches close and braid:[5]
The shade beneath a canvess-braid[6] outthrow,
Held aff the sunbeams frae a bonny how:[7]
Here she resolves to rest, and maybe die,
And lean'd her head unto the kindly tree."

[1] Want. [2] Closeness. [3] Good. [4] Path. [5] Broad. [6] Canvas width. [7] Hollow.

It is well to say that Nory did not die; and that matters turned out happily enough in the end. There can be no question of the truth and power of this realistic painting. It belongs distinctly to the school of Ramsay, and it is not unworthy of the master. In 'Biddy's Dream of the Fairies,' Ross rises to perhaps his highest reach in imaginative power.

Michael Bruce (1746-1767), born at Kinnesswood, on the banks of Lochleven, died at the early age of twenty-one, while a student in the Divinity Hall of the Burghers or Associate Synod. The first edition of Bruce's poems appeared after his death in 1770, edited by

Logan. The two poems in the volume of interest to us as referring to nature, and also of greatest merit, are the 'Elegy to Spring' and the 'Ode to the Cuckoo.' These are the two last pieces in the volume. There is no question as to Bruce being the author of the former. This is distinctly acknowledged in the preface by the editor.* His authorship of the 'Ode to the Cuckoo' is a well-known subject of dispute. The 'Elegy,' written when he knew himself to be dying of consumption, shows great sensibility to outward nature, delicacy of observation and feeling, and, in the latter part, "is wrought up," as Logan somewhat strongly puts it, "into the most passionate strains of the true pathetic, and is not perhaps inferior to any poetry in any language." The following stanzas give the picture of spring:—

"Loos'd from the bands of frost, the verdant ground
Again puts on her robe of cheerful green,
Again puts forth her flow'rs; and all around,
Smiling, the cheerful face of spring is seen.

* *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Michael Bruce. Pref., p. vi (1770).

Behold! the trees new deck their wither'd boughs:
Their ample leaves the hospitable plane,
The taper elm, and lofty ash, disclose;
The blooming hawthorn variegates the scene:

The lily of the vale, of flow'rs the queen,
Puts on the robe she neither sew'd nor spun:
The birds on ground, or on the branches green,
Hop to and fro, and glitter in the sun.

Soon o'er the eastern hills the morning peers;
From her low nest the tufted lark upsprings,
And, cheerful singing, up the air she steers;
Still high she mounts, still loud and sweet she sings.

On the green furze, cloth'd o'er with golden blooms
That fill the air with fragrance all around,
The linnet sits, and tricks his glossy plumes,
While o'er the wild his broken notes resound.

While the sun journeys down the western sky,
Along the greensward, mark'd with Roman mound,
Beneath the blithesome shepherd's watchful eye,
The cheerful lambkins dance and frisk around.

. . . . . .

Thus have I walk'd along the dewy lawn;
My frequent foot the blooming wild hath worn;
Before the lark I've sung the beauteous dawn,
And gather'd health from all the gales of morn.

And, even when winter chill'd the agèd year,
I wander'd lonely o'er the hoary plain;
Tho' frosty Boreas warned me to forbear,
Boreas, with all his tempests, warn'd in vain.

Now spring returns: but not to me returns
The vernal joy my better years have known;
Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,
And all the joys of life with health are flown.

Starting and shiv'ring in the inconstant wind,
Meagre and pale, the ghost of what I was,
Beneath some blasted tree I lie reclined,
And count the silent moments as they pass:

The wingèd moments, whose unstaying speed
No art can stop, or in their course arrest;
Whose flight shall shortly count me with the dead,
And lay me down in peace with those that rest.

. . . . . .

Farewell, ye blooming fields! ye cheerful plains!
Enough for me the churchyard's lonely mound,
Where melancholy with still silence reigns,
And the rank grass waves o'er the cheerless ground.

There let me wander at the shut of eve,
When sleep sits dewy on the labourer's eyes;
The world and all its busy follies leave,
And talk with Wisdom where my Daphnis lies.

There let me sleep, forgotten in the clay,
When death shall shut these weary aching eyes;
Rest in the hopes of an eternal day,
Till the long night is gone, and the last morn arise."

William Falconer, James Beattie, Michael Bruce, Hector Macneill, Robert Fergusson, Andrew Scott, James Macpherson, bring us down to the time of Burns and the close of the eighteenth century.

William Falconer (1730-1769) was born in Edinburgh, and went early to sea. He was shipwrecked in the Britannia off Cape Colonna, at

the age of eighteen. This gave the occasion of the subject of his poem, 'The Shipwreck.' It is remarkable for its realism and faithfulness to the scenes of the sea, and is thus interesting as evidencing the now growing tendency of poetry to return to fact and nature. Falconer had a strong feeling for striking coast scenery, as witness his description of Cape Colonna :—

"But, now, Athenian mountains they descry,
And o'er the surge Colonna frowns on high.
Beside the Cape's projecting verge is placed
A range of columns, long by time defaced ;
First planted by devotion to sustain,
In elder times, Tritonia's sacred fane.
Foams the wild beach below with madd'ning rage,
Where waves and rocks a dreadful combat wage."

Falconer's art in description was not of the highest kind; yet he interests by his power, truthfulness, and human feeling. What Thomson was on land, Falconer was on the sea, but with neither the variety nor the lofty reach of the author of 'The Seasons.'

James Beattie (1735-1803), born at Laurencekirk, in Kincardineshire, and educated at Aberdeen, was afterwards schoolmaster at Fordoun, and finally Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in Marischal College. Beattie occupied a position of great influence and distinction in his time, through his various writings. 'The Minstrel' is that by which he was and is now best known. It is mainly an autobiographical account of the progress and development of the poet's mind and imagination. It is indeed in the same line as 'The Prelude' which Wordsworth wrote some thirty years afterwards. 'The Minstrel' and 'The Prelude' might form the subject of an interesting literary comparison. Unquestionably Wordsworth got nearer to the heart of nature, and of the moral and spiritual problems which press on the young reflective spirit; and in simplicity and power of expression, 'The Prelude' is immeasurably higher than the earlier poem. Still there can be no question of the ardour, candour, and purity of the mind of Beattie, and of its deep and wide sensibility to the aspects of nature in its manifold forms. It is, indeed, the history of a poetic imagination nursed in the

scenes of his native Kincardineshire, mingled with lights reflected from Spenser and Thomson, and from a classical reading, especially in Virgil and Homer. Add to these the respectable faith, moral feeling and practice of the moderate Churchman of the last century, and you have the make-up of the poem.

The following extracts will show the relation of the poet in his early time, to the world of outward nature:—.

"And yet poor Edwin was no vulgar boy;
Deep thought oft seemed to fix his infant eye.
Dainties he heeded not, nor gaud, nor toy,
Save one short pipe of rudest minstrelsy.
. . . . . .
Lo! where the stripling, wrapped in wonder, roves
Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;
And sees, on high, amidst th' encircling groves,
From cliff to cliff, the foaming torrents shine:
While waters, woods, and winds in concert join,
And Echo swells the chorus to the skies.
Would Edwin this majestic scene resign
For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies?
Ah no! he better knows great Nature's charms to prize.

And oft he traced the uplands, to survey,
When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,
The crimson cloud, blue main, and mountain gray,
And lake, dim-gleaming on the smoky lawn:
Far to the west, the long, long vale withdrawn,
Where twilight loves to linger for a while;
And now he faintly kens the bounding fawn,
And villager abroad at early toil.
But, lo! the Sun appears, and heaven, earth, ocean smile.

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,
When all in mist the world below was lost.
What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,
Like shipwrecked mariner on desert coast,
And view th' enormous waste of vapour tossed
In billows, lengthening to the horizon round,
Now scooped in gulfs, with mountains now embossed!
And hear the voice of mirth and song rebound,
Flocks, herds, and waterfalls along the hoar profound!

In truth, he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.
In darkness and in storm he found delight;
Nor less than when on ocean wave serene
The southern Sun diffused his dazzling sheen,
Even sad vicissitude amused his soul:
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wished not to control.

Oft when the winter storm had ceased to rave,
He roamed the snowy waste at even, to view
The cloud stupendous, from th' Atlantic wave
High-towering, sail along the horizon blue;
Where, 'midst the changeful scenery, ever new,
Fancy a thousand wondrous forms descries,
More wildly great than ever pencil drew—
Rocks, torrents, gulfs, and shapes of giant size,
And glittering cliffs on cliffs, and fiery ramparts rise.

Thence musing onward to the sounding shore
The lone enthusiast oft would take his way,
Listening, with pleasing dread, to the deep roar
Of the wide-weltering waves. In black array,

When sulphurous clouds rolled on the autumnal day,
Even then he hastened from the haunt of man,
Along the trembling wilderness to stray,
What time the lightning's fierce career began,
And o'er heaven's rending arch the rattling thunder ran.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile, whate'er of beautiful or new,
Sublime or dreadful, in earth, sea, or sky,
By chance or search, was offered to his view,
He scanned with curious and romantic eye.
Whate'er of lore tradition could supply
From Gothic tale, or song, or fable old,
Roused him, still keen to listen and to pry.
At last, though long by penury controlled,
And solitude, his soul her graces 'gan unfold.

Thus on the chill Lapponian's dreary land,
For many a long month lost in snow profound,
When Sol from Cancer sends the season bland,
And in their northern caves the storms are bound;
From silent mountains, straight, with startling sound,

Torrents are hurled; green hills emerge; and lo!
The trees with foliage, cliffs with flowers are crowned;
Pure rills through vales of verdure warbling go;
And wonder, love, and joy, the peasant's heart o'erflow."

Again:—

"O, how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven,—
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven!"

There is in these passages the true pulse of nature feeling,—the free disinterested love and sympathy with the outward world in its soft and beautiful not less than in its sterner aspects of mildness and power, sweep of ocean and

storm,—objects which give rise to the strong emotions of grandeur, dread, and sublimity. The scenes of the valley of the Dee, the receding glens of Kincardineshire, the wild sea of that eastern rock-girdled coast, had not been touched before; and there had been nothing equal to this in the way of typical picturing since the date of 'The Seasons' (1730). While the diction cannot be said to be simple—rather that of an acquired style, foreign to the author—it is yet frequently both felicitous, picturesque, and powerfully impassioned. And the versification, while tending to monotony, is nevertheless finished, flowing, and impressive.

Again, in an oft-quoted passage, he says:—

"But who the melodies of morn can tell?
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side;
The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried
In the lone valley; echoing far and wide
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above;
The hollow murmur of the ocean tide;
The hum of bees, the linnet's lay of love,
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.

The cottage curs at early pilgrim bark;
Crowned with her pail, the tripping milkmaid sings;
The whistling ploughman stalks afield; and, hark!
Down the rough slope the ponderous waggon rings;
Through rustling corn the hare astonished springs;
Slow tolls the village clock the drowsy hour;
The partridge bursts away on whirring wings;
Deep mourns the turtle in sequestered bower,
And shrill lark carols clear from her aërial tour."

This description is not without merit, but the picture is rather a mixed one. It has not been drawn at first hand; and in the ear of the poet were sounding obviously epithets, phrases, and lines descriptive of wholly different scenery from that which lay around him. It is a series of pleasing pictures, without complete unity of composition.

In his own style of picturesque imaging, Beattie has done nothing better than in these four lines:—

"Now beamed the evening star,
And from embattled clouds emerging slow,
Cynthia came riding on her silver car;
And hoary mountain cliffs shone faintly from afar."

Looking to the directness and pith of Beattie's style when he adopted the vernacular, as in his Epistle to Mr Alexander Ross,—the author of the pastoral 'Helenore,'—there is ground for regret that he did not write more in "our country leed" (language), which he lauds as

"far frae barren,—
'Tis even right pithy and auld-farren." [1]

[1] Old-fashioned.

There is one descriptive stanza in this poem which brings before us with more vivid directness a glimpse of characteristic Scottish scenery than he has shown elsewhere in his measured and somewhat pompous English:—

"Oh, bonny are our greensward hows,
Where through the birks the burnie rows,
And the bee bums and the ox lows
And saft winds rusle,[2]
And shepherd lads on sunny knowes
Blaw the blythe fusle." [3]

[2] Rustle.

[3] Whistle.

This is free from that sentimental pause and musing which sometimes mars his more elaborate pictures of nature and makes them tedious.

Robert Fergusson (1751-1774) was born in Edinburgh. He studied at St Andrews, became a clerk in Edinburgh, and died in a madhouse at the early age of twenty-three. Fergusson was mainly a city poet—a painter of the manners of the Edinburgh of the time. How he influenced Burns, and how especially Burns modelled both his rhythm on that of Fergusson and his 'Cottar's Saturday Night' on the earlier poet's 'Farmer's Ingle,' are facts well known. One can hardly say what Fergusson, as a poet, might have achieved had he lived. That he had a quick, original sensibility for nature is shown, among other pieces, in 'Hame Content,' by the 'Ode to the Bee,' and that 'To the Gowdspink.' His love for his native scenery is infused with an intense patriotism. Scotland, indeed, has not produced a more patriotic poet than Fergusson. In this he foreshadowed, and doubtless influenced, Burns. Fergusson was essentially native in his genius; he turned to Scottish manners and landscape for inspira-

tion; he followed and furthered the work of Ramsay in turning our literature from conventional themes and so-called classical treatment of them to Scottish scenery and music, and the modes of Scottish life. Witness such a passage as the following from 'Hame Content':—

"The Arno and the Tiber lang
Hae run fell clear in Roman sang;
But, save the reverence o' schools,
They're baith but lifeless, dowie pools.
Dought they compare wi' bonnie Tweed,
As clear as only lammer bead?
Or are their shores mair sweet and gay
Than Fortha's haughs or banks o' Tay?
Though there the herds can jink the showers
'Mang thriving vines and myrtle bowers,
And blaw the reed to kittle strains,
While Echo's tongue commends their pains;
Like ours, they canna warm the heart
Wi' simple, saft, bewitching art.
On Leader haughs and Yarrow braes
Arcadian herds wad tyne their lays,
To hear the mair melodious sounds
That live on our poetic grounds.

Come, Fancy! come, and let us tread
The simmer's flowery velvet bed,
And a' your springs delightful lowse[1]
On Tweda's banks or Cowdenknowes,
That, ta'en wi' thy enchanting sang,
Our Scottish lads may round ye thrang,
Sae pleased they'll never fash again
To court you on Italian plain;
Soon will they guess ye only wear
The simple garb of nature here."

[1] Let loose.

Fergusson, while much of a city poet, had a heartfelt feeling for the green fields that bordered the streets sloping down from the Castle, and the adjoining closes of Old Edinburgh in last century:—

"While danderin' cits delight to stray
To Castlehill or public way,
Where they nae other purpose mean
Than that fool cause o' being seen,
Let me to Arthur's Seat pursue,
Where bonnie pastures meet the view,
And mony a wild lorn scene accrues,
Befitting Willie Shakspeare's muse.
If Fancy there would join the thrang,
The desert rocks, and hills amang,

To echoes we should lilt and play,
And gie to mirth the livelang day.
Or should some canker'd biting shower
The day and a' her sweets deflower,
To Holyroodhouse let me stray,
And gie to musing a' the day;
Lamenting what auld Scotland knew,
Bein[1] days for ever frae her view.
O, Hamilton, for shame! the Muse
Would pay to thee her couthy vows,
Gin ye wad tent the humble strain,
And gie's our dignity again!
For, oh, waes me! the thistle springs
In domicile o' ancient kings,
Without a patriot to regret
Our palace and our ancient state."

[1] Comfortable.

The whole feeling of this is very fine. The outgoing to the hills and the wilds; the sense of them as things in which to delight and rejoice for their own sakes; then, when the driving, biting blast comes, to retreat for musing on the old story and the faded glories of Holyrood—the symbol of all that was strongest, best, and most tragic in Scottish history,—all this marks the soul of the true poet, raised far above com-

monplace and Philistinism. The spirit of the 'Farmer's Ingle' is in the same line of feeling for the life around him, homely picturing and stirring national associations.

In the 'Ode to the Bee' occur the following lines:—

"Herds, blythsome tune your canty reeds,
An' welcome to the gowany meads,
The pride o' a' the insect thrang,
A stranger to the green sae lang:
Unfold ilk buss an' ilka brier,
The bounties of the gleesome year,
To him whase voice delights the spring,
Whase soughs the saftest slumbers bring.
The trees in simmer-cleading drest,
The hillocks in their greenest vest,
The braw'st flowers rejoic'd we see,
Disclose their sweets and ca' on thee,
Blythly to skim on wanton wing
Through a' the fairy haunts o' spring.

. . . . . .

Behold the bees whare'er they wing,
Or thro' the bonny flowers o' spring,
Where violets or where roses blaw,
And siller dew-drops nightly fa',

Or when on open bent they're seen,
On heather hill or thristle green;
The hiney's [1] still as sweet that flows
Frae thristle cauld or kindling rose."

[1] Honey.

Andrew Scott (1757-1839), the peasant poet of Bowden, a small village lying beneath the shadow of the Eildons, is the author of a fine poem, 'Rural Content; or, the Muirland Farmer.' He touches the passing scenes of the year with a loving hand:—

"An' whan the year smiles, an' the laverocks sing,
My man, Jock, an' me shall be doin' o't;
He'll thrash, and I'll toil on the fields in the spring,
An' turn up the soil at the plowin' o't.
An' whan the wee flow'rets begin then to blaw,
The laverock, the peasweep, and skirlin' pick-maw,
Shall hiss the bleak winter to Lapland awa',
Then we'll ply the blythe hours at the sowin' o't."

With the close of the century there came an influence into poetry in Scotland, and England

as well, which, both in its freshness and its fulness, was new to the literature of Europe. This arose through the work of James Macpherson (1738-1796), when he revived or constructed out of previous materials the Ossianic poems. I do not propose to enter into this controversy. It seems to me that these poems are not in their entireness the work of one man, far less of Macpherson, whose capacity is open to test, in the light of his accredited productions in poetry and prose. That Macpherson is not the author of 'Ossian' is proved simply by the fact that he could not have written it. That he worked up into form and a certain coherency of arrangement fragments already in existence, some of them very old, seems to me to be the probable theory of the Ossianic poems. What was old, what was added, I feel quite incompetent to determine; that would require Gaelic scholarship, to which I have no pretensions. But there can be no doubt of the immense influence of the publication in 1762 of 'Fingal,' and in 1763 of 'Temora,' on the course of poetic feeling all over Europe. Europe was waiting for freedom from shackles of various kinds; and it rejoiced in the new vision of

mountain glory and mountain freedom which was opened up in these strange, weird, Celtic poems.

"Whether the poetry was old or the product of last century," says Principal Shairp, "it describes as none other does the desolation of dusky moors; the solemn brooding of the mists on the mountains; the occasional looking through them of sun by day, of moon and stars by night; the gloom of dark cloudy Bens or Cairns with flashing cataracts; the ocean with its storms, as it breaks on the West Highland shores, or on the headlands of the Hebrides. Wordsworth, though an unbeliever in Ossian, felt that the fit dwelling for his spirit was—

'Where rocks are rudely heaped and rent,
As by a spirit turbulent,
Where sights are rough and sounds are wild,
And everything unreconciled,
In some complaining dim retreat,
For fear and melancholy meet.'" *

The same writer very happily adds: "What-

* *Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, p. 222.

ever men may now think of them, there cannot be a doubt but these mountain monotones took the heart of Europe with a new emotion, and prepared it for that passion for mountains which has since possessed it." *

Poetic Interpretation of Nature, p. 223.

CHAPTER XVI.

MODERN PERIOD: ROBERT BURNS.

(1759-1796.)

In the poets last mentioned, filling up in the main the gap from Ramsay to Burns (1759-1796), we have much interesting reference to features of Scottish scenery and a decided consciousness of its power, but by no means a full sense of the wonderful world that lay around them. In this respect, when we come to Burns, who may be said to close the last quarter of the eighteenth century, we find much more intensity, even a certain kind of rapt enthusiasm for nature. Not that Burns was at all a catholic poet of nature, or rose even to its impassioned analogies with man, or its deep symbolism—not even that he had a soul for the full sweep of natural objects in their high-

est, grandest effect. But there was in him an intense love for certain aspects of nature within his observation and his range; and further, he had a wonderful power of swift, deft picturing in a few vivid lines what some others would have taken stanzas to present.

In Burns, the references to the aspects of nature are, as a rule, incidental. But then these are, in many of his poems, permeated with a sympathy for man as man — for his feelings, his hopes, his aspirations, his miserable condition in an artificial state of the world, and a living imaginative hope in the gradual coming of a higher social destiny. They appear also, as every one knows, in his love-songs, making the most exquisite surrounding and the most delicate harmony with the feeling — sometimes, it may be, forming that terrible contrast which we know between human hopelessness and nature's joy.

Of the varied and intense susceptibility to outward nature which characterised Burns, we have ample evidence even in his letters. Writing to Mrs Dunlop, he says:—

"This day [New Year's Day], the first Sun-

day of May, a breezy blue-skied noon some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end of autumn—these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday. . . . I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild rustling cadence of a troop of grey plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities, — a God that made all things — man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave."

But the soul of Burns was not less open to

the stern side of nature, in its form, at least, of winter energy and winter storm. Here clearly we see evidence of the influence of Thomson, acting on a quite exceptional natural sensibility. Speaking of the circumstances in which he composed 'Winter; a Dirge,' Burns tells us: "As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure which are in a manner peculiar to myself, or some here and there such out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in

'The mighty tempest and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep stretched o'er the buried earth,'

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to everything great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object which gives me more,—I do not know if I should call it pleasure —but something that exalts me—something that enraptures me,—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy

winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and roving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew Bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.' In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following." Here follows the 'Dirge.' It is clear from this that Burns looked upon this sensibility of his as an uncommon feature of character almost peculiar to himself, showing obviously how little it was shared in by the people around him, or indeed expressed in the current literature of the time. We ought to be thankful to the poet for his precious susceptibility, for his courage, and his power in expressing his emotions in verse; for thus the world came to learn from him that there was a new link of communion between the pure soul of man and the universe of God.

In 'The Vision,' Burns has idealised, with grace unsurpassed, the spirit of his own poetry and the aims of his life. It is thus introduced:—

"The sun had clos'd the wintry day,
The curlers quat their roarin' play,

An' hunger'd maukin ta'en her way
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin'-tree
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And whan the day had clos'd his e'e
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensively,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd wi' hoast-provoking smeek
The auld clay biggin'
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin'."

Coila enters:—

"Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well-known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar."

Coila—one of the finest of visions which ever dawned on poet's eye—addresses the despairing bard thus:—

"'I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim nature's visage hoar,
Struck thy young eye.

'Or when the deep green-mantl'd earth
Warm-cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,

And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
With boundless love.

'When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

. . . . . .

'And wear thou this,' she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away."

There are many inimitable pictures dashed off in a stanza or two. The "Widow Leezie" in 'Halloween'—

"thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin',
Whare three lairds' lands met at a burn,
To dip her left sark sleeve in
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't.
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel
Unseen that night.

Amang the brackens on the brae,
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up an' gae a croon;
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,
But mist a fit, an' in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night."

In April:—

"Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae,
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae."

In November:—

"While, tumbling, brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day."

Again:—

"'The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,'
The joyless winter day
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May."

In the 'Epistle to William Simson,' 1785, we have the following:—

"We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks and braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
Frae Suthron billies.

. . . . . .

O, sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy;
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
Wi' wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me,
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shows an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light;
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The Muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trottin' burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray and pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!"

In his dealing with the wild, stern, powerful impersonal forces of nature, Burns has never risen higher than in those stanzas from 'A Winter Night:'—

"When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
When Phœbus gies a short-liv'd glow'r,
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r,
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-chok'd,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd,
Down headlong hurl.

List'ning, the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle
Beneath a scaur.

Ilk happing bird,—wee, helpless thing!
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you, on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats!"

There is in this withal that deep, tender, delicate, true-hearted sympathy for the creatures of the wilds amid the pitiless storm which marks the true poet, and which connects the bard of the eighteenth century with those who had before him touched the same theme—especially with Gawin Douglas, Thomson, and Cowper. There is a real community in the poetic heart all through the ages.

There is perhaps no better illustration of how Burns went out in feeling and sympathy for the free, pure, gentle things of nature as they come from the hand of God, than those exquisite lines 'To a Mountain Daisy,' on turning one down with the plough, in April 1786:—

"Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;

For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my power,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no' thy neibor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward-springing blithe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield
High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

. . . . . .

Even thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom!"

The tenderness of the nature of the man comes out in these lines, as it does in other poems—such as the address 'To a Mouse,' on turning her up in her nest with the plough, the lines on the 'Wounded Hare,' and above all, in one of his most passionate outflowings, the 'Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson.' The latter is full of most truthful references to outward nature, and the whole is fused with an extraordinary intensity of feeling, paralleled only in the 'Lycidas' of Milton and the 'Adonais' of Shelley—

"Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens!
Ye haz'lly shaws and briery dens!
Ye burnies, wimplin' down your glens,
Wi' toddlin' din,
Or foaming strang, wi' hasty stens,
Frae lin to lin.

Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;
Ye stately foxgloves fair to see;
Ye woodbines hanging bonnilie,
In scented bow'rs;
Ye roses on your thorny tree,
The first o' flow'rs.

At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
Droops with a diamond at his head,
At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed,
I' th' rustling gale,
Ye maukins, whiddin' thro' the glade,
Come join my wail.

Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood;
Ye grouse that crap the heather bud;
Ye curlews calling thro' a clud;
Ye whistling plover;
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood;
He's gane for ever!

. . . . . .

Mourn, clam'ring craiks, at close o' day,
'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay;
And when ye wing your annual way
Frae our cauld shore,
Tell thae far warlds, wha lies in clay,
Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy-bow'r,
In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r,
What time the moon, wi' silent glow'r,
Sets up her horn,
Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
Till waukrife morn!"

This is picturing by epithet, so simply yet so happily chosen, that each scene passes in succession, complete in itself, and vivid with all the charm of real presence.

No finer stanzas has Burns left us of the mingling of scenery and simple pathos than in those two which occur in the 'Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots, on the Approach of Spring':—

"Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae:

The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove thae sweets amang;
But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang.

. . . . . .

Oh! soon, to me, may simmer-suns
Nae mair licht up the morn!
Nae mair, to me, the autumn winds
Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house o' death
Let winter round me rave;
And the next flow'rs that deck the spring,
Bloom on my peaceful grave!"

This is one of the greatest triumphs of simple art, won through the natural power of contrast, often so mysteriously manifested, between nature and our human lot, especially the joy of heaven and earth, and our despondency, or even awful sorrow. We know how skilfully Burns has worked this out in some of his most exquisite love songs, — as in 'Ye Banks and Braes,' 'Menie,' and 'Mary in Heaven.'

Thus in 'Menie':—

"In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
In vain to me the violets spring;

In vain to me, in glen or shaw,
The mavis and the lintwhite sing.

. . . . . .

The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
And everything is bless'd but I.

. . . . . .

Come, winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When nature all is sad like me."

And we know also how impressively he has woven the harmonious moods of mind and nature in one, as in 'Afton Water, 'The Birks of Aberfeldy,' and many others.

In none is this done more perfectly than in the song,—'Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes,'—of which the following is the opening stanza :—

"Hark! the mavis' evening sang
Sounding Clouden's woods amang;
Then a-faulding let us gang,
My bonnie dearie.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them where the heather grows,
Ca' them where the burnie rows,
My bonnie dearie."

The chorus and tune are both old. The song has been recast by Burns.

Of Burns there are these things to be said. In the first place, he shook himself free of the bookish and conventional way of looking at nature which was so prevalent, at least in most poets of English birth and training, regarded as models in the century in which he lived. Possibly his acquaintance with them was so inconsiderable, that their mode of looking at outward things never permanently affected him. In the descriptions of nature in his vernacular dialect, he is not only free from this modishness, but happy, rejoicing, loving, and intense. His power of epithet, that mark of the master of description, is wholly unsurpassed. The quotations already made show in every line to the patient student the aptness, the power, and the home-reaching vividness of the dialect of Ayrshire Scottish. The same cannot be said of his descriptions in English, any more than of the

quality of his letter-writing, which, in so far as it affects to be classical English, is pompous, affected, unreal, and frequently ridiculous. On this point the truth ought to be told, if only to prevent unwarrantable encomium, and deter people who are not heaven-born geniuses from imitating his defects. His poetical compositions in what no doubt he considered fine English are, as a rule, vapid and wordy. 'Mary in Heaven' is, as Principal Shairp remarks, doubtless a signal exception. But it is true of his verses on 'Bruar Water,' and, except for one or two lines, his address to the 'Shade of Thomson.' Well might he confess, as he does, his being abashed in the presence of Collins's Ode on the death of the author of 'The Seasons.'

Further, the side of nature which Burns loved, felt so intensely, and described so well, was that immediately around him in his native Ayrshire, or in the valley of the Nith. Soft stream, glen, haugh, knowe, and cultivated plain were the objects of attraction; and on the Ayrshire coast, the sounding shore and the energy of breaking ocean waves. For height, or strength, or mass of mountain; for cloud or mist that trailed along mountain-tops and fused

them with the sky; for all the glory and grandeur of mountain scenery,—he had no real feeling. "The power of hills," as we know it in Ossian and in Wordsworth, was never on him. He was born and brought up within sight of the peaks of the shadowy mountains of Arran; he could see them any day from the farm of Mount Oliphant or the heights above Mauchline—all familiar to him—yet he never mentions them in his poems: they had neither educating nor inspiring influence for him. In this, Burns showed a distinct limitation in regard to what is grandest in nature, and to the feeling which, since his time, has spread over the whole of cultured Europe.

Burns came after Macpherson and the Ossianic poems. But it was not on him they were to have their true, or indeed any, effect. Nor does he appear to have been appreciably influenced by the ballads. The men who came under the ballad influence truly and really were, first Leyden, then Scott, and ultimately James Hogg.

CHAPTER XVII.

MODERN PERIOD: JAMES GRAHAME—MRS GRANT OF LAGGAN—JOANNA BAILLIE.

(1765–1851.)

THE modern period, in which there is a gradually growing and final appreciation of all the aspects of Scottish scenery—gentle, soft, stern, wild, and overawing—cannot be better introduced than by the name of the gentle and patriotic Grahame, the author of 'The Sabbath,' but the author also of the 'British Georgics' and the 'Rural Calendar.' Grahame shows the influence of Thomson and the application of his spirit of minute observation and fidelity to Scottish scenery, and, in a way, the influence also of the Ossianic poems in a certain mitigated sympathy for the sterner scenery of the

country, and for the pathos and the weirdness to be found in even the Lowland life of Scotland.

James Grahame (1765-1811) was born in Glasgow, and educated at the University there. His descent can be traced back to a Thomas Grahame, surgeon in Hoddom, who was an offshoot, if not the representative, of the Grahames of Blackwood. The Blackwood line claimed to represent the main stem of the family of which are the Grahames of Netherby. Clearly, at least, the author of 'The Sabbath' was of the Grahames of the Border. Bred a lawyer, he abandoned the profession, and took orders in the Church of England. He was curate first at Shepton Mayne, in Gloucestershire, and then at Sedgefield, in Durham. He is the author of 'The Sabbath' (1804); 'Sabbath Walks,' 'The Birds of Scotland' (1806); 'British Georgics' (1809); and the 'Rural Calendar.' Grahame had obviously been a close student of Thomson, but clothes his matter in a purer English style. He is also clearly under the influence of the more tender and pathetic parts of the Ossianic poems —those, especially, relating to Cona and Selma. He was a very careful and loving observer of outward nature, his description of its objects,

creatures, and aspects forming the staple of his poetry, and by far the best part of it. Grahame is indeed one of the most faithful and widest delineators of Scottish scenery in our literature. His diction is not impassioned, but it is most exact. Every simple and homely aspect of his native land had its charm for him; and over the whole of his verse there is diffused a spirit of genial human emotion and true-hearted sympathy for man, bird, and beast. A man with a more impassioned patriotic Scottish heart we have not in all our poetry. His well-known picture of the Sabbath morning is one of the finest instances of purity of description and unity of impression in the language:—

"How still the morning of the hallowed day!
Mute is the voice of rural labour, hushed
The ploughboy's whistle and the milkmaid's song.
The scythe lies glittering in the dewy wreath
Of tedded grass, mingled with fading flowers,
That yester-morn bloomed waving in the breeze.
Sounds the most faint attract the ear—the hum
Of early bee, the trickling of the dew,

The distant bleating mid-way up the hill.
Calmness sits throned on yon unmoving cloud.
To him who wanders o'er the upland leas,
The blackbird's note comes mellower from the dale;
And sweeter from the sky the gladsome lark
Warbles his heaven-tuned song; the lulling brook
Murmurs more gently down the deep-worn glen;
While from yon lowly roof, whose curling smoke
O'ermounts the mist, is heard at intervals
The voice of psalms—the simple song of praise."

This is a true picture of a Sabbath morning in rural Scotland. 'A Summer Sabbath Walk' is not less well done, though too long for quotation.

Here is a perfectly true and literal picture from 'An Autumn Sabbath Walk:'—

"As yet the blue-bells linger on the sod
That copes the sheepfold ring; and in the woods

A second blow of many flowers appears,—
Flowers faintly tinged, and breathing no perfume.
But fruits, not blossoms, form the woodland wreath
That circles Autumn's brow. The ruddy haws
Now clothe the half-leaved thorn; the bramble bends
Beneath its jetty load; the hazel hangs
With auburn bunches, dipping in the stream
That sweeps along, and threatens to o'erflow
The leaf-strewn banks: oft, statue-like, I gaze
In vacancy of thought upon that stream,
And chase, with dreaming eye, the eddying foam,
Or rowan's clustered branch, or harvest sheaf,
Borne rapidly adown the dizzying flood."

Again, in 'A Winter Sabbath Walk,' this is perfect:—

"How dazzling white the snowy scene! deep, deep
The stillness of the Winter Sabbath-day—
Not even a footfall heard. Smooth are the fields,
Each hollow pathway level with the plain:

Hid are the bushes, save that here and there
Are seen the topmost shoots of brier or broom.
High-ridged, the whirled drift has almost reached
The powdered keystone of the churchyard porch.
Mute hangs the hooded bell; the tombs lie buried;
No step approaches to the house of prayer."

Graham's 'British Georgics' and 'Rural Calendar' have the characteristics of his genius already referred to. In the 'Rural Calendar' we have a picture in succession of each month of the year. Here is a Dutch picture from February, worthy of its best art:—

"While yet the night is long, and drear, and chill,
Soon as the slanting sun has sunk from view,
The sounding anvil cheerily invites
The weary hind to leave his twinkling fire,
And bask himself before the furnace glare;
Where, blest with unbought mirth, the rustic ring,
Their faces tinted by the yellow blaze,
Beguile the hours, nor envy rooms of state."

In July:—

"Let me peaceful roam
The winding glen, where now the wild-rose pale,
And garish broom, strew, with their fading flowers,
The narrow greenwood path. To me more sweet
The greenwood path, half-hid, 'neath brake and brier,
Than pebbled walks so trim; more dear to me
The daisied plat before the cottage-door
Than waveless sea of widely spreading lawn,
'Mid which some insulated mansion towers,
Spurning the humble dwellings from its proud domain."

The two last lines of this picture contain a finely realistic touch:—

"How peaceful sails
Yon little fleet, the wild duck and her brood!
Fearless of harm, they row their easy way;
The water-lily, 'neath the plumy prows,
Dips, reappearing in their dimpled track."

This is well-turned and pathetic. It is entitled, 'Epitaph on a Blackbird killed by a Hawk:'—

" Winter was o'er, and spring flow'rs decked the glade;
The blackbird's note among the wild woods rung:
Ah, short-lived note! the songster now is laid
Beneath the bush, on which so sweet he sung.
Thy jetty plumes, by ruthless falcon rent,
Are now all soiled among the mouldering clay;
A primrosed turf is all thy monument;
And, for thy dirge, the redbreast lends his lay."

His patriotic sympathy with the Covenanters, and his manly detestation of Claverhouse and all his works, do the poet special honour. Here is a picture of the spot where the godly remnant would gather in the wilds of a Sabbath morning for worship:—

" Long ere the dawn, by devious ways,
O'er hills, through woods, o'er dreary wastes they sought
The upland moors, where rivers, there but brooks,
Dispart to different seas. Fast by such brooks
A little glen is sometimes scooped, a plat
With greensward gay, and flowers that strangers seem

Amid the heathery wild, that all around
Fatigues the eye: in solitudes like these
Thy persecuted children, Scotia, foiled
A tyrant's and a bigot's bloody laws."

Of modern planting and its wretched artifice, which has broken, blurred, and disfigured many a hillside and many a bracken glen,—Grahame, with the heart of the true poet of nature, has the following denunciation. He is referring, in the first place, to the destruction of "the double row of venerable elms" and "the orchard trees," with a view to the new style of planting round an old home. There had, unfortunately, set in a blinded impulse against straight lines of trees as avenues or approaches to country-houses —some of these things that have been spared being now among the most impressive relics of a strong old time. But the rage in the beginning of the century was for serpentine lines, and, therefore, weakness. A person of the name of Brown went about landscape-gardening, and, afflicting the country with eyesores. The lairds were, of course, as a rule, ignorant, tasteless, and merely in the fashion. Thus writes Grahame:—

"Around the whole, a line vermicular,
Of melancholy fir, and leaning larch,
And shivering poplar, skirting the wayside,
Is thinly drawn. But should the tasteful power,
Pragmatic, which presides, with pencilling hand
And striding compasses, o'er all this change,
Get in his thrall some hapless stream, that lurks
Wimpling through hazelly shaw and broomy glen,
Instant the axe resounds through all the dale,
And many a pair, unhoused, hovering lament
The barbarous devastation: all is smoothed,
Save here and there a tree; the hawthorn, brier,
The hazel-bush, the bramble, and the broom,
The slae-thorn, Scotia's myrtle, all are gone;
And on the well-sloped bank arise trim clumps,
Some round and some oblong, of shrubs exotic,
A wilderness of poisons, precious deemed
In due proportion to their ugliness." *

We have not yet got to so simple and natural a sense of the beautiful in landscape, even in these days, as not to need the poet's criticism. Grahame further quotes with approval Price's views on the mode of planting of fir

* *Poems, Birds of Scotland*, ii. 18.

and larch, which had then begun to prevail in the country:—

"The trees which principally showed themselves were larches, and, from the multitude of their sharp points, the whole country appeared *en hérisson*, and had much the same degree of resemblance to natural scenery that one of the old military plans, with scattered platoons of spearmen, has to a print after Claude or Poussin.

"A planter very naturally wishes to produce some appearance of wood as soon as possible: he, therefore, sets his trees very closely together, and so they generally remain, for his paternal fondness will seldom allow him to thin them sufficiently. They are consequently all drawn up together, nearly to the same height; and as their heads touch each other, no variety, no distinction of form can exist; but the whole is one enormous, unbroken, unvaried mass of black. Its appearance is so uniformly dead and heavy that, instead of those cheering ideas which arise from the fresh and luxuriant foliage, and the lighter tints of deciduous trees, it has something of that dreary image, that extinction of form

and colour, which Milton felt from blindness. The inside of these plantations fully answers to the dreary appearance of the outside of all dismal scenes. It seems to me the most likely for a man to hang himself in: he would, however, find some difficulty in the execution; for, amidst the endless multitude of stems, there is rarely a single side-branch to which a rope could be fastened. The whole wood is a collection of tall naked poles, with a few ragged boughs near the top. . . . Below, the soil parched and blasted with the baleful droppings; hardly a plant or a blade of grass; nothing that can give an idea of life or vegetation."

This is a strong picture, but one's own experience testifies that it is not overdrawn, even now. If we add to the density of the trees the enormity of the shapes of the whole clump or patch, as set high on the hillside in, say, the valley of the Tweed,—sometimes the fiddle-pattern, sometimes the crab varied by the tadpole, sometimes a body without legs, sometimes legs without a body,—we shall have a very fair picture of what is regarded as modern improvement—even adornment.

The writings in prose and verse of Mrs Grant of Laggan (1754-1838) ought not to be omitted in any sketch of the development of the feeling for nature in Scotland. Her 'Letters from the Mountains' and 'Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders' (1811), served to fix the attention on Highland scenery and the weird imaginings among the Bens, already brought under the notice of the country in the Ossianic poems. The heather bloom, which had been absent from Scottish poetry all through the Stuart time down to its sparse recognition in Thomson and others, got from Mrs Grant full appreciation in her poem, 'On a Sprig of Heath:'—

"Flower of the waste! the heath-fowl shuns
For thee the brake and tangled wood;
To thy protecting shade she runs,
Thy tender buds supply her food;
Her young forsake her downy plumes,
To rest upon thy opening blooms.

Flower of the desert though thou art!
The deer that range the mountain free,
The graceful doe, the stately hart,
Their food and shelter seek from thee;

The bee thy earliest blossom greets,
And draws from thee her choicest sweets.

Gem of the heath! whose modest bloom
Sheds beauty o'er the lonely moor;
Though thou dispense no rich perfume,
Nor yet with splendid tints allure,
Both valour's crest and beauty's bower
Oft hast thou decked, a favourite flower.

Flower of the wild! whose purple glow
Adorns the dusky mountain's side,
Not the gay hues of Iris' bow,
Nor garden's artful varied pride,
With all its wealth of sweets, could cheer,
Like thee, the hardy mountaineer."

Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) was born in the Manse of Bothwell. To her we owe a large portion of the impulse to simplicity in theme, treatment, and language which has come to characterise poetical literature during the last half-century. Miss Baillie was mainly a dramatist; but there was in her the love of simple nature, and she has here and there touched with a graphic hand a passing scene—often character-

istically Scottish. This is especially true of the volume of miscellaneous pieces published by her in 1841 under the title of 'Fugitive Verses.'

Here is a picture, obviously from memory, of the lowly Lanarkshire abodes of her day :—

"Even now methinks
Each little cottage of my native vale
Swells out its earthen sides, upheaves its roof,
Like to a hillock moved by labouring mole,
And with green trail-weeds clambering up its walls,
Roses, and every gay and fragrant plant,
Before my fancy stands, a fairy bower,—
Ay, and within it too do fairies dwell.
Peep through its wreathèd window, if indeed
The flowers grow not too close; and there within
Thou'lt see some half-a-dozen rosy brats
Eating from wooden bowls their dainty milk—
Those are my mountain elves."

Joanna Baillie and her sister Agnes lived together in close and sweet companionship during the years of a long life. In the touching stanzas addressed by Joanna to Agnes on the birthday of the latter, we have a pleasant re-

trospective picture of their early days at Bothwell Manse:—

"Dear Agnes, gleamed with joy and dashed
with tears,
O'er us have glided almost sixty years,
Since we on Bothwell's bonny braes were seen,
By those whose eyes long closed in death have
been.
Two tiny imps who scarcely stooped to gather
The slender harebell or the purple heather;
No taller than the foxglove's spiky stem,
That dew of morning studs with silvery gem.
Then every butterfly that crossed our view
With joyful shout was greeted as it flew;
And moth, and ladybird, and beetle bright,
In sheeny gold, were each a wondrous sight.
Then as we paddled barefoot, side by side,
Among the sunny shallows of the Clyde,
Minnows or spotted parr with twinkling fin,
Swimming in mazy rings the pools within,
A thrill of gladness through our bosoms sent,
Seen in the power of early wonderment."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MODERN PERIOD: JOHN LEYDEN.

(1775–1811.)

We are now at the close of the eighteenth century and the opening of the nineteenth, and thus at the point where there was a new, freer, nobler vision of the grandeur of the earth. Now there began that consciousness of mountain grandeur in all its forms—mountain-tops in sunshine and in cloud; deep, arrestive, rugged glens; mountain torrents and cataracts; wide, wild, solitary moorlands; and all that daring aggressiveness against peak and apparently inaccessible height which have grown during the first half of this century, and which we now know in its fulness and its power. This means the overcoming of repugnance on

the part of man to the sternest side of nature—his reconciliation to what was terrible and repulsive to him all through the ages. Macpherson's 'Ossian' alone did not accomplish this; it helped greatly. The cultured poets, except Thomson, did little for it. One power that worked in this direction has not been sufficiently appreciated, or indeed noticed at all. Among the many services to literature, poetry, and art, rendered by the recovery and publication, first by Percy and then by Scott, of the older minstrelsy of the district lying immediately north and south of the Cheviots, is the help afforded to the growth of the feeling for the sterner, grander side of nature. The old Ballad narratives tended directly and indirectly to make what to men hitherto had appeared simply powerful and terrible, an object of harmoniously toned and pleasurable æsthetical feeling. We might fairly enough say of the older Scottish poets—indeed the whole series of native poets and prose writers up to Percy's time, and even beyond—that their feeling for the sterner side of the Scottish landscape—for mountain, flood, forest, shadowed glen, and winter storm—was one of dread, even fear. Thomson,

who went to England and in retrospect looked back on the Scottish landscape, overcame the feeling. But the poets dwelling in Scotland were permeated by it to the core. Exceptions, occasional glimpses, passing intuitions of something better there were, as we have noted in Drummond of Hawthornden and a few others; but these were extremely rare and passing. Now, in the Ballads of the Forest, which came from the heart of the people and went to the heart of ever succeeding generations, there were signs of a transition stage. The earlier dread was passing into something purer, higher, more soothing and æsthetic. There is the appearance of the rise and the growth of the purely contemplative feeling which accompanies the quiet self-satisfaction of imagination—simple delight in the grander side of things. The sterner aspect of the world was gradually ceasing to be terrible and repugnant. Even in a stanza of this sort there is an approach to the more purely imaginative feeling:—

"The King was comin' thro' Cadon Ford,
And full five thousand men was he,
They saw the derke foreste them before,
They thought it awesome for to see."

Awesome, — not a source of terror or dread, only that quiet arrestive feeling which subdues but does not repel or prostrate.

The mediæval spirit, indeed, regarded forest-depths as almost wholly repulsive, the haunts of darkness and danger, and probably full of secret entrances to regions of supernatural terrors. This spirit was now evidently dying in the minstrelsy of the Border Land, for the awesome is by no means synonymous with the terrible. Rather it is something intermediate between the emotions of dread and sublimity, being a marked feature, indeed the very heart, of the sublime.

Then, those living in the forest came to know it familiarly, and to taste the joy of the free life which it afforded; and this gradually found utterance in song:—

"Ettrick Foreste is a feir foreste,
In it grows many a semelie tree;
There's hart and hind, and dae and rae,
And of a' wild bestis grete plentie."

It was through a loving study of these Ballads that Walter Scott got the incident and story— the sense even of the power and variety of

primary human emotion, which grew into such a glory of development in his poetry and prose. Their help to him was not less in serving to form that feeling of free, pure, abounding delight in the grander aspects of things, and the most striking manifestations of natural powers alike in Lowland and Highland scenery, which he was the first fully to express in Scottish poetry. But before Scott, the power of the old Ballad had been working on a son of the Teviot, both in the way of romantic incident and of the free feeling for nature. This was the author of the 'Scenes of Infancy.'

John Leyden (1775-1811) was born in the village of Denholm, in Teviotdale, and spent his boyhood there almost under the shadow of Ruberslaw, and within sight of the crags of Minto. The incidents of his life are well known. After studying in the University of Edinburgh for the Church, he took to Medicine, qualified himself for a diploma in less than a year, went to Madras in April 1803, and after a short career of great and varied energy in India, he died of fever in Java in August 1811, at the early age of thirty-six. Leyden was an early

friend of Walter Scott, and aided him in the collection of the material of the two first volumes of the 'Minstrelsy of the Border,' published in 1802. Scott was then living chiefly at his cottage in Lasswade. And to him and Leyden the banks of the Esk and the country round Roslin and Hawthornden were familiar scenes—"The wild wood walks by Esk's romantic shore." In his 'Ode to an Indian Gold Coin,' written in Malabar, memories of those early days came upon him:—

"Sweet visions haunt my waking dreams
Of Teviot loved while still a child,
Of castled rocks stupendous piled
By Esk or Eden's classic wave,
Where loves of youth and friendship smiled,
Uncursed by thee, vile yellow slave."

Leyden's career, from his birth in the lowly cottage at Denholm to his death on a foreign shore, is one of the most self-dependent, manly, and energetic on record. The muse of Scottish poetry and the muse of Eastern learning equally mourned his untimely fate.

Leyden made two contributions of Border Ballads to the 'Minstrelsy.' These—'Lord

Soulis' and 'The Cout of Keeldar'—are both of the romantic type; but they are of special interest to us as among the first of the modern Border Ballads which showed that loving sympathy with the aspects of hill, stream, and glen, as objects of poetic interest, which has since become so characteristic, even as an independent element, of the poetry of the district.

Several of his minor poems show a true and faithful observation of the aspects of nature, and power of delineation. In his 'Sonnet on Sabbath Morn,' which may be compared with the opening lines of the 'Sabbath,' and which has been thought by some to have suggested the train of thought in these lines to the later poet, he says:—

"With silent awe I hail the sacred morn,
That scarcely wakes while all the fields are still;
A soothing calm on every breeze is borne,
A graver murmur echoes from the hill,
And softer sings the linnet from the thorn;
The skylark warbles in a tone less shrill.

Hail, light serene! hail, sacred Sabbath morn!
The sky a placid yellow lustre throws;

The gales that lately sighed along the grove
Have hushed their drowsy wings in dead repose;
The hovering rack of clouds forgets to move:
So soft the day when the first morn arose."

. . .

The poem of Leyden which contains the fullest effort and the highest reach of his genius is the 'Scenes of Infancy.' We must go back in thought to December 1802, when, leaving behind him the slow prospect of preferment in Scotland, constantly and characteristically so dull and backward in its recognition of genius in literature or philosophy, he went to London to join the Christmas fleet of Indiamen, and leave his native shore, never by Scot more beloved, and take up his new position of Assistant-Surgeon in Madras. He did not sail till April 1803. But he had carried with him some cherished fragments in manuscript. These were the impressions of his native Teviotdale, in all its varied aspects of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The heart of the susceptible youth had felt and cherished the visions of that varied vale; and he had given expression to them in very musical and powerful verse. They had little connection and

unity except that which arises from the soul of the poet, who had received, retained, and expressed all the varied course of the corresponding soul of nature in his well-loved Teviotdale. He employed the interval between December and April in arranging the pieces, and, here and there, adding to them the regrets of the patriot and the friend leaving the objects of his affection. The volume appeared in 1803; it was Leyden's legacy to his native land. We ought always to keep in mind that Leyden, the friend of Scott, though the younger man, was the older poet. The 'Scenes of Infancy' appeared in 1803. The 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' did not appear until January 1805.

In the 'Scenes of Infancy' Leyden touched the scenery, the feelings and the manners, the ballads, the superstitions, and the weird imaginings of the Border Scot, as these had never been touched before. They were on his heart; he had been brought up among them, his imagination nourished by them; and he gave them a realistic presentation such as he alone at that period could have given.

Leyden, in the 'Scenes of Infancy,' was the first of our purely native-bred and resident

Scottish poets to feel alike the tenderness and the simple beauty of the gentle side of nature, and the power—the awing and subduing power—of its sterner side in the form of wild mountain, upland solitude, and winter storm. In him this double sympathy was fused, and, so far at least as Border scenery was concerned, —especially the whole stretch of his native Teviotdale, from the source of the stream on the north-west to the dim forms of the Cheviots on the south and east,—his feeling was complete. And further, Leyden was the first not only to feel the power of this district intensely and completely; he was the first to describe the scenery of the Borders as in itself without help or interest from story, a sufficient object of poetic regard and interest. Leyden, in fact, revealed the power that lay in the Border scenery, and in doing so he opened up a field of poetic pleasure and imaginative gratification which was afterwards more minutely and extensively, but not more truthfully, cultivated by Walter Scott, alike in his poetry and his prose.

One has but to pass up Ewesdale to Mosspaul and the junction of the Frostylee Burn with the Teviot, and keep an open eye

on the course of the classic stream, to feel how faithfully and lovingly Leyden has taken in the varied recurring aspects of the water and dale:—

"From wilds of tawny heath and mosses dun,
Through winding glens scarce pervious to the sun,
Afraid to glitter in the noontide beam,
The Teviot leads her young sequester'd stream;
Till, far retiring from her native rills,
She leaves the covert of her sheltering hills,
And, gathering wide her waters on their way,
With foamy force emerges into day.

Where'er she sparkles o'er her silver sand,
The daisied meads in glowing hues expand;
Blue osiers whiten in their bending rows;
Broad o'er the stream the pendent alder grows;
. . . . . .
Gray downs ascending dimple into dales;
The silvery birch hangs o'er the sloping vales;
While, far remote, where flashing torrents shine,
In misty verdure towers the tapering pine,
And dusky heaths in sullen languor lie,
Where Cheviot's ridges swell to meet the sky.
. . . . . .

Nor scenes alone with summer beauties bright,
But winter's terrors brought a wild delight,
With fringed flakes of snow that idly sail,
And windows tinkling shrill with dancing hail;
While, as the drifting tempest darker blew,
White showers of blossoms seem'd the fields to strew.

. . . . . .

How wild and harsh the moorland music floats,
When clamorous curlews scream with long-drawn notes,
Or, faint and piteous, wailing plovers pipe,
Or, loud and louder still, the soaring snipe!
And here the lonely lapwing whoops along,
That piercing shrieks her still-repeated song,
Flaps her blue wing, displays her pointed crest,
And lowering lures the peasant from her nest.

. . . . . .

Though with the rose's flaring crimson dye
The heath-flower's modest blossom ne'er can vie,

. . . . . .

The swain, who 'mid her fragrance finds repose,
Prefers her tresses to the gaudy rose,
And bids the wild bee, her companion, come
To sooth his slumbers with her airy hum.

Sweet modest flower, in lonely deserts dun,
Retiring still for converse with the sun.

. . . . . .

The noon-breeze pauses now, that lightly blew;
The brooding sky assumes a darker hue;
Blue watery streaks, diverging, downwards run,
Like rays of darkness from the lurid sun;
The shuddering leaves of fern are trembling still;
A horrid stillness creeps from hill to hill;
A conscious tremor nature seems to feel,
And silent waits the thunder's awful peal.

. . . . . .

Land of my fathers! though no mangrove here
O'er thy blue streams her flexile branches rear,
Nor golden apples glimmer from the tree,—
Land of dark heaths and mountains! thou art free."

Leyden's address to the Jed and reference to Thomson, who was brought up on its banks, is perhaps the best specimen of the reach and height of descriptive power in his writings:—

"To thee, fair Jed! a holier wreath is due,
Who gav'st thy Thomson all thy scenes to view.

. . . . . .

In March, when first, elate on tender wing,
O'er frozen heaths the lark essays to sing;
In March, when first, before the lengthening days,
The snowy mantle of the earth decays,
The wreaths of crusted snows are painted blue,
And yellow moss assumes a greener hue—
How smiled the bard, from winter's funeral urn,
To see more fair the youthful earth return!
When morn's wan rays with clearer crimson blend,
And first the gilded mists of spring ascend,
The sunbeams swim through April's silver showers,
The daffodils expand their yellow flowers,
The lusty stalk with sap luxuriant swells,
And, curling round it, smile the bursting bells;
The blowing king-cup bank and valley studs,
And on the rosiers nod the folded buds;—
Warm beats his heart to view the mead's array,
When flowers of summer hear the steps of May.

But when the wintry blast the forest heaves,
And shakes the harvest of the ripen'd leaves;
When brighter scenes the painted woods display
Than fancy's airy pencil can portray,

He pensive strays the sadden'd groves among,
To hear the twittering swallow's farewell song.
The finch no more on pointed thistles feeds,
Pecks the red leaves, or crops the swelling seeds;
But water-crows by cold brook-margins play,
Lave their dark plumage in the freezing spray,
And, wanton as from stone to stone they glide,
Dive at their beckoning forms beneath the tide.
He hears at eve the fetter'd bitterns scream,
Ice-bound in sedgy marsh or mountain stream,
Or sees, with strange delight, the snow-clouds form
When Ruberslaw conceives the mountain storm:
Dark Ruberslaw, that lifts his head sublime,
Rugged and hoary with the wrecks of time!
On his broad misty front the giant wears
The horrid furrows of ten thousand years;
His aged brows are crown'd with curling fern,
Where perches grave and lone the hooded erne,—
Majestic bird! by ancient shepherds styl'd
The lonely hermit of the russet wild,
That loves amid the stormy blast to soar,
When through disjointed cliffs the tempests roar,
Climbs on strong wing the storm, and, screaming high,
Rides the dim rack that sweeps the darken'd sky."

It is clear from these passages that we are now in a new world of poetry—by the water and the burn; up the glen amid the brackens, and on the moorland and the hill with the heather. Mountain height, mist, and storm, and nature's grander energies, have become powers for the poet's soul. The partition-wall of the garden, the bound of the cultivated field, and the trimmed spreading lawn, have been surmounted, and we have set before us the vision of the free and wild beauty and the grandeur that lies beyond. This had been wooing the poets of Scotland long; some of them had been charmed for a time; only now has it fairly won the poetic heart.

Leyden's interest in scenery and in descriptive poetry led him to collect, and publish in 1803, some poems of local and general reference, in a volume entitled 'Scottish Descriptive Poems, with some Illustrations of Scottish Literary Antiquities' (Edinburgh: Mundell & Son). The volume contains, among others, 'Albania,' and 'The Clyde,' by John Wilson. The volume is of considerable interest, as showing the new tendency of the poetry of the time, ere Scott had

made his noble use of the suggestion, carried it out to its fulness, and attached to the scenery and the names of places so many stirring local and historical associations.

Through this collection Leyden made generally known the poem of 'Albania.' This was first published in London in 1737. Author and editor are alike unknown. The editor, in the original preface, says that the poem was written "by a Scots clergyman some years ago, who is since dead." The author was apparently only twenty-four at the time of its production. Beattie, in a note to his 'Essays on Poetry and Music,' was the first to draw attention to the passage descriptive of the spirits of the deceased pursuing the chase on their native hills, or "invisible hunting," which afterwards gained the admiration of Scott, as expressed in a note to the 'Minstrelsy.' Leyden speaks of 'Albania' as "a descriptive poem of a very peculiar kind. It does not delineate the general aspect of the country, descant on its qualities capable of poetical representation, or describe the character and genius of its inhabitants: it commences with an animated address to the genius of Scotland, expresses the most ardent sentiments of

devoted patriotism, and insensibly glides into a description of some peculiar features of the country which had most forcibly impressed the mind of the author."* The diction is remarkably pure and unconventional, and some of the passages are very fervid and vigorous. The points touched on in the description are, however, often commonplace, even mean, showing how very gradually descriptive art learned to recognise its appropriate themes. As a favourable specimen, we may take the opening lines:—

"O loved Albania! hardy nurse of men!
Holding thy silver cross, I worship thee,
On this, thy old and solemn festival,
Early, ere yet the wakeful cock has crowed.
Hear! goddess, hear! that on the beryl-flood,
Enthroned of old, amid the waters' sound,
Reign'st far and wide o'er many a sea-girt spot,
Oh smile! whether, on high Dunedin, thou
Guardest the steep and iron-bolted rock,
Where trusted lie the monarchy's last gems,
The sceptre, sword, and crown that graced the brows
Since father Fergus, of an hundred kings:

* *Scottish Descriptive Poems*, p. 142.

Or if, along the well-contested ground,
The warlike Borderland, thou marchest proud;
In Teviotdale, where many a shepherd dwells,
By lovely winding Tweed, or Cheviot brown:
Nor ween I now, in Durham's lofty spire
To seek thee, though thy loved St David's work;
Nor where Newcastle opes her jetty mines
Of coal; nor in strong Berwick; nor in Man,
That never dreaded plague; nor in the wilds
Of stony Westmoreland: all once thy own.

Hail, land of bowmen! seed of those who scorned
To stoop the neck to wide imperial Rome.
O dearest half of Albion, sea-walled!
Hail! state unconquered by the fire of war,
Red war, that twenty ages round thee burned;
To thee, for whom my purest raptures glow,
Kneeling with filial homage, I devote
My life, my strength, my first and latest song.

Thou goddess! by the softening sun beloved,
Rejoicest, he, with unfulfilled desire,
Delights not only on thy face to dwell
In amorous smile, the livelong summer's day;
But, looking back from the Atlantic brine,

Eyes thy glad slumbers with reflected beam,
And glitters o'er thy head the clear night long." *

These lines, the last especially, contain a very fine and true poetic touch, and make us regret the loss to literature involved in the early death of the author.

The following reference is pleasing:—

"Perth,
Whose evening bells the roving Highlander
Hears sweet, though far descending Stenton hill."

He would talk, too,—

"At once delighted and appalled,
By the pale moon, with utmost Hirta's seers,
Of beckoning ghosts, and shadowy men, that bode
Sure death."

The famous passage on "invisible hunting," as it has been called, is as follows:—

"Ere since of old, the haughty thanes of Ross,—
So to the simple swain tradition tells,—

* Pp. 157, 159.

Were wont with clans, and ready vassals thronged,
To wake the bounding stag or guilty wolf,
There oft is heard at midnight or at noon,
Beginning faint, but rising still more loud
And nearer, voice of hunters and of hounds,
And horns hoarse-winded, blowing far and keen;
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies, the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din
Of hot pursuit, the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs, the shouts of men,
And hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the noise, and both the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast he eyes
The mountain's height, and all the ridges round,
Yet not one trace of living wight discerns;
Nor knows, o'erawed and trembling, as he stands,
To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,—
To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend,—
But wonders, and no end of wondering finds." *

This is a very powerful picture of fine imaginative suggestion. The scene had been already

* Pp. 167, 163.

embodied in the old Romance of 'Orfeo and Heurodis.' Orfeo, having lost his wife, retires to a desert, and there—

"He micht se, him bi sides,
Oft in hot undertides,
The king o' fairy, with his route,
Com to hunt him al about;
With dim cri, and bloweing,
And houndes also with him berking,[1]
Ac[2] no best[3] thai no nome,[4]
No never he nist[5] whider thai bi come." *

1 Barking.
2 And.
3 Beast.
4 Did not perceive.
5 Knew.

John Wilson (1720-1789), born in the vicinity of Lanark, became parochial schoolmaster of Lesmahagow in 1746. He was invited to superintend the grammar-school of Greenock in 1767. The magistrates and minister of Greenock, before they admitted Wilson to the headship of the school, stipulated that he "should abandon the profane and un-

* *Orfeo and Heurodis*, in Auchinleck MS., quoted by Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 244, and also in *Scottish Descriptive Poems*, p. 186. The text given by Leyden has been corrected. Reference may also be made to the *Life of Ambrosius Merlin* (1651), p. 29, where such a scene is mentioned as within the power of his wizardry.

profitable art of poem-making."* Wilson's muse was thus silenced, to his own great regret, during the rest of his life.

The 'Clyde' appeared in 1764, and was a new form of the 'Nethan,' previously published. It is not without merit, though both diction and form of description are decidedly conventional and generalised.

Leyden has very fairly estimated Wilson's merits in the following terms: "His descriptions of rural scenes and occupations are always true to nature, and often diversified by striking and picturesque touches. . . . In the localities of description, when the subject admits of vivid contrast or picturesque delineation, Wilson frequently exhibits both energy and discrimination. The dark majesty of Tinto, the towering grandeur of Ailsa, the Falls of the Clyde, which in an uncommon degree unite sublimity and picturesque beauty, were subjects calculated to excite the enthusiasm of poetical fancy; but many of the names which occur in the 'Clyde' would have found a more appropriate place in topography than in poetry. The style of description which he employs consists rather in

* Leyden's preface to the *Clyde*, p. 8.

the accurate enumeration of particular objects than in the expression of the mental feelings which they are fitted to inspire. Instead of describing the effect of a scene on the mind of an observer, he delineates, piece by piece, the different parts of which it is composed. For this reason, his enumerations of objects sometimes present an obscure or a confused picture; his groups are silent and dead; and from his delineations of natural objects we feel not the emotions with which the view of nature affects us." Yet Leyden regards Wilson as ranking high as a "loco-descriptive" poet.*

The following is a favourable specimen of Wilson's powers:—

"Here let me walk abroad when tempests fly,
And careless hear them rage along the sky;
Where forest trees with daring grandeur rise,
Disdain the earth, and bold invade the skies.
How wide his arms the stately ash extends!
The plane's thick head 'mid burning day suspends
Impenetrable shade; bees humming pour
O'er the broad balmy leaves and suck the flower

* *Scottish Descriptive Poems*, pp. 30, 31.

Green shoots the fir his spiry point on high;
And fluttering leaves on trembling aspens sigh;
With haughtier air, see the strong oak ascend,
Too proud before an angry heaven to bend:
His leaves unshaken, winter's rage defy;
He shades a field, and heaves a wood on high;
Glories in stubborn strength, when tempests roar,
And scorns to yield, save to the thunder's power."*

Leyden wrote the preface to the 'Scottish Descriptive Poems' on the 20th December 1802. His own work, 'The Scenes of Infancy,' was not published until after this date; though of course he had been engaged on it for long before. It is obvious that he found in those earlier poems of 'Albania,' and especially 'The Clyde,' suggestions for his own line of thought and imagination, — a line in which he has certainly immensely advanced on at least the latter poem.

* *Scottish Descriptive Poems*, pp. 60, 61.

CHAPTER XIX.

MODERN PERIOD: SIR WALTER SCOTT.

(1771–1832.)

Walter Scott (1771-1832) is the greatest name in pictorial art—whether applied to incident, action, outward object, or scene—which occurs in the history of Scottish poetry; and he is not surpassed in the long line of English literature. For variety of theme, for power of grouping, for richness of detail, for unity of effect, Scott has certainly no modern rival.

The incidents of his life need not be set forth further than as they bear on the nature and bent of his descriptive powers. But no one has taken on the colour of his surroundings more than Scott. If he made the Borderland and its scenery glorious to the world, it was because

that land and scenery had first made him. His childhood at Smaylholm, his youth at Kelso, his wanderings among the Border glens, his early residence at Ashestiel,—these were the circumstances, concurring with the transfusing power of the old Ballad strains and the ancient inspiring legends and chivalrous story, which moulded the character and imagination of Scott, and fixed the direction of his observational and creative powers. The Tweed, the Ettrick, the Yarrow, and the Teviot claim him as the son of their nurture; and never did a son of these streams, or of that land which they water, give back such a loving and glorious recompense for inspiring lesson.

Scott had the advantage of Leyden's poem. He was more, perhaps, than Leyden under the permeating influence of the Ballads. As his friend Shortreed said of him when he was making his raids into Liddesdale in search of the old ballad lore, "He was makin' himsel', and he didna ken o't." He had not hurriedly, as a young man, to leave his native land that he might earn a bare livelihood. He had friends among the privileged classes who were able to put him into posts of emolument. Leyden could only wait for

a kirk, and for the ministry apparently he had but indifferent liking. Scott died not at thirty-six, but at sixty-one. He was thirty-four ere he published 'The Lay.' His opportunities of knowing Scottish scenery were infinitely superior to those of Leyden. He had ridden through Perthshire and the Trossachs, knew the counties immediately north of the Forth well. Latterly he made a voyage round Scotland, saw the glories and the rugged grandeur of its western shore; knew the Orkneys, Skye, and the Hebrides. His sphere of observation was ample; he noted everything and forgot nothing. Thus it was that Scott took in a much greater range of Scottish scenery than Leyden, or any one who had preceded him. Ocean and rocky shore, Highland glen and dell, corrie, crag, and peak, mountain grandeur, such as the west coast of Rossshire shows, with its splintered summits and bare flinty steeps, unmarked by herb or greenery, quite different from the smooth, flowing, rounded, sculpturesque hills of the Border,—all these he had seen, noted, and treasured as memories. Hence Scott, with an intensity equal to Leyden's, and a defter hand, was able to compass in his descriptions a variety and a reach unknown

to former Scottish poets—indeed to any poets, Scottish or other.

And Scott was a master of descriptive art. As to his precise relation to nature, he differs doubtless from many masters—men who have come under nature's power. He had not the reflection which Coleridge interfused with his picturing, or the spiritual and ethereal imagining of Shelley, apt to die in its own excess of glory; the tumultuous dash of Byron, or the impassioned symbolism of Wordsworth. He never connected, as did the latter, the forms of nature with a spirit working in and through all, and so holding communion with the heart of the poet-seer—living with him, becoming to him an object of worship and of daily religion. All this was foreign to him. But what eye could see and ear hear Scott noted, of form and colour, of life and living hue, of softest sough of stream and the sweep of grandest storm, of joyous spring and luxurious summer, mellow autumn and winter wrath and energy.

To him the Border wilds in all their fulness had a heart-constraining charm; but he delighted not less in Highland grandeur—in the savage wilderness of Coruisk and the solitary charms

and melancholy awe of Iona and the Hebrides. Hence it was that he introduced into British poetry an interest in a range of natural objects, such as no one had known or felt before.

A master of description, too, he was, in respect especially of imaginative grasp and deftness of execution. His genius was above all and essentially sensuous, delighting in form and colour. More than this it was; but this was its heart and inspiration. What impressed eye and ear in nature, the fact of history, the pomp of incident, the garniture, the clothing, equipment, deportment of people, — all this Scott noted, loved, revelled in. He was a master, too, of contrast; and this is essential to the highest natural description. This appears not only in his natural picturing but in his novels, where his most powerful impressions are wrought out through the opposition of the situation of the person to his or her actual feelings. The strongest scenes in 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian' and in 'Kenilworth,' taking these alone, exemplify this. The description of Don Roderick's camp may be taken as illustrating the power of contrast in description; and in a still more subtle form we have it in the setting together of motion

and rest, as in the picture of the voyage of the vessel along the shore of rocky Northumberland, and in the ride of William of Deloraine from Branksome to Melrose. The keynote is struck in the introduction of the Knight of Deloraine:—

> "Alike to him was time or tide,
> December's snow, or July's pride;
> Alike to him was tide or time,
> Moonless midnight, or matin prime."

And then we have the contrast between the hurrying motion of the rider and the places which, while at rest, yet glanced in rapid succession on his view, and stirred his feelings:—

> "Soon in his saddle sate he fast,
> And soon the steep descent he passed,
> Soon crossed the sounding barbican,
> And soon the Teviot side he won.
> Eastward the wooded path he rode,
> Green hazels o'er his basnet nod;
> He passed the Peel of Goldiland,
> And crossed old Borthwick's roaring strand;
> Dimly he viewed the Moat-hill's mound,
> Where Druid shades still flitted round;

In Hawick twinkled many a light;
Behind him soon they set in night;
And soon he spurred his courser keen
Beneath the tower of Hazeldean."

The still objects in the dim night acquire a certain moving life from the hurrying action and emotion of the speeding horseman.

But Scott was not a man of mere eye and ear. He had in him pre-eminently the soul of pathos. He walked subdued in presence of the outward world as a great and transcendent power which moved and inspired him; and he felt especially those aspects of it which soothe and sadden the heart. This was to be expected from his up-bringing in the Forest, amid its symbols of decay—in the form of solitary thorn and birch on the hillside, and broken and decaying tower perched here and there on the knowe by the water or the burn. The old life of the past was constantly present to him, and the feeling of what had been, but was now no more, and never to be recalled, was awakened and quickened by the broken tower, and its bole open to the sky-gleam and the wailing wind. Thus locality,

river, and story were fused in one overawing pathetic emotion.

His deftness in description—spontaneous master of its technique—is unquestionable. If any one were to take Scott's descriptions in turn, and carefully analyse each, he would find in the end the exemplification of all the best and highest laws of descriptive art. Scott seldom or never fails in the highest end of that art—unity of impression — in conveying successfully one predominating emotion, or enabling the mind to carry away the single image of a complex whole. Bold and varied he is in details, rich in form and sensuous in colouring especially; but these are always subordinated to the single aim of the poet; they are in bearing, proportion, and proper reference. Then he is exceedingly truthful. The details are given as they were seen or felt, and as they bear on the total impression. They are set at a particular place or time. They have always the power of real—that is, vivid—presence; and they are often highly typical—not restricted to the mere passing experience. Like all great masters of description, Scott is powerful in epithet; for therein the pictorial element lies, and therein, too, the essence of the object can be

expressed. Further, he is a master of the art of disclosure. Bit by bit the picturing comes out; bit by bit often the scene is set before you; there is the expectancy of what is to follow, and there is the line of natural suggestion. And, finally, there is the gathering or winding up of the whole in the climax of complete effect.

It is hard nowadays to have to quote Scott. The excellence of his picturing of the outward world has been so thoroughly recognised that every schoolboy has, or ought to have, his best limnings on his lips. Long may it be before Scott is displaced from our educational training. That will be a bad day for Scotland and the Scottish youth. This is true, but all the same the grounds of the preference we give to these picturings are seldom sought or thought of. Yet they are worthy material of reflection and analysis, for in them we see into the working and essence of those first principles of the æsthetical imagination, which are truly rules for all time, and ought to be as standards of rebuke for poor or inferior workmanship.

It is not my purpose here to illustrate Scott's general powers of pictorial description, as these touch incident and action as well as scenery.

Those who wish to see Scott at his best may refer to the scenes of 'Marmion'—to the wonderfully finished picture of Sir David Lyndsay, Lord Lyon King-at-Arms; to the passage of the English army over Twisel Bridge in the presence of the inactive and chivalrous Scottish king on Barmore ridge; to the description of Tantallon Castle, with its massed strength fronting the waves; to the storm of the tumultuous battle of Flodden, and the final stand round the king when the evening fell: these are unsurpassed in British portraiture, whether by poet or artist. If the perfection of descriptive art be the presence of the real, you have it in all these—hardly one remove from the very vision of it—ay, more fully given than if you had been a simple isolated spectator.

In the delineation of outward objects and scenes he is nowhere better than in the description of Norham Castle, the picture of Edinburgh from the Braid Hills, and in those wonderful landscapes of Loch Katrine in 'The Lady of the Lake.' To these may be added the pictures in 'Rokeby'—rather in the later style of his art, where reflection is mingled with simple portraiture. Such is the description of the moon

in her summer glow over the Tees, the ravine of Greta between Rokeby and Mortham, and Bertram's wild pursuit up the mountain of the apparently supernatural form on the dim summit.

But we have descriptions which flow even more directly from the heart than those already referred to, and which are suffused with an intense and constantly pervading pathos — in the pieces afterwards printed by him as Introductions to the Cantos of 'Marmion' (1808). There Scott is himself,—not simply pictorial, but speaking the very language of his heart, and the very soul of his early years and upbringing. He has done nothing truer or finer in the way of description than in those somewhat arbitrarily prefixed and splendid Introductions. We have what he saw and felt in his early youth and spontaneous prime, at Smaylholm Tower and at blessed Ashestiel,—blessed because as yet the ambitious dream of Abbotsford had not interfered with the free course of his natural life, or entered as an aim into the actual current of his thoughts.

We have a picture of Tweedside in November (Introduction, Canto I.), and of the same and of Yarrow in Introductions to Cantos IV.

and V. In that to Canto II. we have a picture of Ettrick Forest as it was; a description of St Mary's Loch in calm, and then in storm from the Wizard's grave. "Dark Loch Skene" is sketched in the same Introduction. In that to Canto III., we have a picture of Sandyknowe and Smaylholm Tower, of his early life there, and the educating influences of the time and scene. A sketch of the Border shepherd's life in winter, and of a snowstorm on the hill, is given in the Introduction to Canto IV. In that to Canto V. we have a picture of December on the Tweed.

NOVEMBER ON THE TWEED.

"The vision of enchantment's past:
Like frostwork in the morning ray,
The fancied fabric melts away;
Each Gothic arch, memorial stone,
And long, dim, lofty aisle are gone;
And, lingering last, deception dear,
The choir's high sounds die on my ear.
Now slow return the lonely down,
The silent pastures, bleak and brown,
The farm begirt with copsewood wild,
The gambols of each frolic child,

Mixing their shrill cries with the tone
Of Tweed's dark waters rushing on." *

This is how the thought of the past, in contrast with the present, touches his heart:—

"The scenes are desert now, and bare,
Where flourish'd once a forest fair,
When these waste glens with copse were lined,
And peopled with the hart and hind.
Yon thorn—perchance whose prickly spears
Have fenced him for three hundred years,
While fell around his green compeers—
Yon lonely thorn, would he could tell
The changes of his parent dell,
Since he, so grey and stubborn now,
Waved in each breeze a sapling bough;
Would he could tell how deep the shade
A thousand mingled branches made;
How broad the shadows of the oak,
How clung the rowan to the rock,
And through the foliage show'd his head,
With narrow leaves and berries red;
What pines on every mountain sprung,
O'er every dell what birches hung,

* *Marmion*, Canto I., Introduction.

In every breeze what aspens shook,
What alders shaded every brook!" *

The lines on St Mary's Loch in calm, in this Introduction to 'Marmion,' show Scott's power of direct picturing at its highest and best. But they do more. For with the outline to the eye is mingled the impression on the soul, made directly by the scene,—the loneliness, the pathos of the bare hillside; the silence, only brought home more deeply by the sound of the mountain streams. This mingling of the outward and inward, of eye and soul, is comparatively rare in Scott's descriptions. It does not, indeed, rise to the symbolism of Wordsworth, with whom the epithet is as suggestive of moral quality or feeling as it is accurately descriptive of the outward. But the soul subdued, pathetic, and pensive in presence of the Lake and its surroundings, shows how deeply the scene had entered Scott's very heart,—entered it as probably only a scene in Yarrow could do.

"When, musing on companions gone,
We doubly feel ourselves alone,"

* *Marmion*, Canto II., Introduction.

Something, my friend, we yet may gain;
There is a pleasure in this pain.

. . . . . .

Oft in my mind such thoughts awake
By lone St Mary's silent lake;
Thou know'st it well—nor fen, nor sedge,
Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge:
Abrupt and sheer, the mountains sink
At once upon the level brink;
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.
Far in the mirror, bright and blue,
Each hill's huge outline you may view;
Shaggy with heath, but lonely bare,
Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake is there,
Save where, of land, yon slender line
Bears 'thwart the lake the scatter'd pine.
Yet even this nakedness has power,
And aids the feeling of the hour:
Nor thicket, dell, nor copse you spy,
Where living thing conceal'd might lie;
Nor point, retiring, hides a dell,
Where swain, or woodman lone, might dwell;
There's nothing left to fancy's guess,
You see that all is loneliness:

And silence aids—though the steep hills
Send to the lake a thousand rills;
In summer tide, so soft they weep,
The sound but lulls the ear asleep;
Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
So stilly is the solitude."

This is perfect as a description,—as a picture, individual and true, as ever the hand of man has limned. Its main outlines are, let us be thankful, true and real still; notwithstanding that the hand of the Philistine has set along the north shore of St Mary's, as far as his power extended, a strip of planting, to show how reckless modern civilisation can be of natural beauty,—ay, and what a paltry thing so-called civilisation is,—when it cannot grasp the power of the simplest, truest aspects of God-given nature.

This, again, is Scott's picture of St Mary's Loch in storm:—

"'Twere sweet to mark the setting day
On Bourhope's lonely top decay;
And, as it faint and feeble died
On the broad lake and mountain's side,

To say, 'Thus pleasures fade away;
Youth, talents, beauty, thus decay,
And leave us dark, forlorn, and grey;'
Then gaze on Dryhope's ruin'd tower,
And think on Yarrow's faded flower:
And when that mountain sound I heard,
Which bids us be for storm prepared,
The distant rustling of his wings,
As up his force the tempest brings,
'Twere sweet, ere yet his terrors rave,
To sit upon the Wizard's grave—
That Wizard Priest's, whose bones are thrust
From company of holy dust;
On which no sunbeam ever shines
(So superstition's creed divines)—
Thence view the lake, with sullen roar,
Heave her broad billows to the shore;
And mark the wild swans mount the gale,
Spread wide through mist their snowy sail,
And ever stoop again, to lave
Their bosoms on the surging wave." *

In 'Marmion,' Scott's descriptive genius comes out in great power.

How fitly, simply, and vividly is the ride of

* *Marmion*, Canto II., Introduction.

Lord Marmion up and across the Lammermoors given!—

"The livelong day Lord Marmion rode:
The mountain path the Palmer show'd,
By glen and streamlet winded still,
Where stunted birches hid the rill.
They might not choose the lowland road,
For the Merse forayers were abroad,
Who, fired with hate and thirst of prey,
Had scarcely fail'd to bar their way.
Oft on the trampling band, from crown
Of some tall cliff, the deer look'd down;
On wing of jet, from his repose
In the deep heath, the black-cock rose;
Sprung from the gorse the timid roe,
Nor waited for the bending bow;
And when the stony path began,
By which the naked peak they wan,
Up flew the snowy ptarmigan.
The noon had long been pass'd before
They gain'd the height of Lammermoor;
Thence winding down the northern way
Before them, at the close of day,
Old Gifford's towers and hamlet lay." *

* *Marmion*, Canto III.

A comparison of passages of this kind with Barbour's bare and literal references to the surroundings of incident, shows the immense advance which poetic art had made in dealing with nature, in the way especially of a becoming fusion of the natural features of the scene with the action portrayed.

In the 'Lady of the Lake,' Scott has opened up the new sphere of Highland scenery.

For variety of details and unity of effect, we have nothing finer than this:—

"The summer dawn's reflected hue
To purple changed Loch Katrine blue;
Mildly and soft the western breeze
Just kiss'd the lake, just stirr'd the trees;
And the pleased lake, like maiden coy,
Trembled but dimpled not for joy;
The mountain-shadows on her breast
Were neither broken nor at rest;
In bright uncertainty they lie,
Like future joys to Fancy's eye.
The water-lily to the light
Her chalice rear'd of silver bright;
The doe awoke, and to the lawn,
Begemm'd with dew-drops, led her fawn;

The grey mist left the mountain-side,
The torrent show'd its glistening pride;
Invisible in flecked sky,
The lark sent down her revelry;
The blackbird and the speckled thrush
Good-morrow gave from brake and bush;
In answer coo'd the cushat dove
Her notes of peace, and rest, and love." *

Here we are out in those Highlands with a full-hearted sympathy for rugged grandeur and power, never felt or known before, at least to the spirit of Saxon or Angle:—

"The western waves of ebbing day
Roll'd o'er the glen their level way;
Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of living fire.
But not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravines below,
Where twined the path in shadow hid,
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the dell
Its thunder-splinter'd pinnacle;
Round many an insulated mass,
The native bulwarks of the pass,

* *Lady of the Lake,* Canto III., st. 2.

Huge as the tower which builders vain
Presumptuous piled on Shinar's plain.
The rocky summits, split and rent,
Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,
Or seem'd fantastically set
With cupola or minaret,
Wild crests as pagod ever deck'd,
Or mosque of Eastern architect.
Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
Nor lack'd they many a banner fair;
For, from their shiver'd brows display'd,
Far o'er the unfathomable glade,
All twinkling with the dew-drops sheen,
The brier-rose fell in streamers green,
And creeping shrubs, of thousand dyes,
Waved in the west wind's summer sighs.
Boon nature scatter'd, free and wild,
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child.
Here eglantine embalm'd the air,
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there;
The primrose pale and violet flower,
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
Emblems of punishment and pride,
Group'd their dark hues with every stain
The weather-beaten crags retain.

With boughs that quaked at every breath,
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;
And, higher yet, the pine-tree hung
His shatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
His bows athwart the narrow'd sky.
Highest of all, where white peaks glanced,
Where glistening streamers waved and danced,
The wanderer's eye could barely view
The summer heaven's delicious blue;
So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream." *

Then comes the picture of Loch Katrine, which opened on the view of the wanderer:—

"An airy point he won,
Where, gleaming with the setting sun,
One burning sheet of living gold,
Loch Katrine lay beneath him roll'd,
In all her length far winding lay,
With promontory, creek, and bay,
And islands that, empurpled bright,
Floated amid the livelier light,

* *Lady of the Lake*, Canto I., st. 11, 12.

And mountains, that like giants stand
To sentinel enchanted land.
High on the south, huge Benvenue
Down on the lake in masses threw
Crags, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurl'd,
The fragments of an earlier world;
A wildering forest feather'd o'er
His ruin'd sides and summit hoar,
While on the north, through middle air,
Ben-An heaved high his forehead bare." *

"It is of little use to the reader," says Mr Ruskin, "now to tell him that still at that date [1838] the shore of Loch Katrine, at the east extremity of the lake, was exactly as Scott had seen it and described—

'Onward, amid the copse 'gan peep
A narrow inlet, still and deep.'

In literal and lovely truth, that was so. By the side of the footpath (it was no more) which wound through the Trossachs, deep and calm under the blaeberry-bushes, a dark, winding, clear, brown pool, not five feet wide at first, reflected the entangled moss of its margin and

* *Lady of the Lake*, Canto I., st. 14.

arch of branches above, with scarcely a gleam of sky.

"That inlet of Loch Katrine was in itself an extremely rare thing: I have never myself seen the like of it in lake shores. A winding recess of deep water, without any entering stream to account for it—possible only, I imagine, among rocks of the quite abnormal confusion of the Trossachs; and besides the natural sweetness and wonder of it, made sacred by the most beautiful poem that Scotland ever sang by her stream-sides. And all that the nineteenth century conceived of wise and right to do with this piece of mountain inheritance was to thrust the nose of a steamer into it, plank its blaeberries over with a platform, and drive the populace headlong past it as fast as they can scuffle." *

I for myself am thankful for these words, "this piece of mountain inheritance"—an inheritance truly which people got, never made, but which certain men squandered. Does one not know innumerable instances of the same painful barbarity, the same indifference, and unconsciousness of the God-given spots of the earth, in His purpose set for all purifying, enno-

* *Præterita*, vol. xii. pp. 411, 412.

bling, and refinement, but any and every day sacrificed without even one look to their purpose of beauty? I have known green haughs of the Tweed furrowed and ploughed by railway, and rendered chaotic by the wholesale ugliness of planks of wood, heaps of coal, stone, and general debris, sheds, railway-sleepers set up as fences, constant engines going to and fro, puffing their foul smoke in the face of heaven, and breaking the harmony of the ancient silence by their shrieking and hissing. Have we not, too, the recent example of Thirlmere being taken from Nature, and its line of waters raised fifty feet—save the mark!—so as utterly to efface every varied, every picturesque spot, every romantic cove, on that wild, winding, beautiful northern shore, unparalleled in all the lakes of England?

And all this was done, and will be done again, the moment some utility is pleaded. I do not wish to exclude the consideration of this element in its widest or even weakest form, but I maintain that alongside of it there ought to be taken into account, as of equal importance, the power of a beautiful thing in nature, the power of an affecting historical thing. This, as

a refining and social influence, is something to be looked at in itself—to be contemplated as an important thing for the world, and for the highest soul of the world. And I think, further, this element should be held especially to weigh, if it can be shown, as it could be, in both the cases to which I have referred, and in many others, that the utility of practicality could quite easily have been secured without the wrecking sacrifice involved. It is a disgrace to our civilisation that it was necessary for the first time in the history of the British Parliament formally to place on its record, so late as the date of the Thirlmere desecration, the propriety of attending in such matters to the element of amenity.

The retreat of Douglas and his daughter introduces us to the heart of the Highland wilderness :—

" It was a wild and strange retreat
As e'er was trod by outlaw's feet.
The dell, upon the mountain's crest,
Yawn'd like a gash on warrior's breast; ..
Its trench had staid full many a rock,
Hurl'd by primeval earthquake shock

From Benvenue's grey summit wild,
And here, in random ruin piled,
They frown'd incumbent o'er the spot,
And form'd the rugged silvan grot.
The oak and birch, with mingled shade,
At noontide there a twilight made,
Unless when short and sudden shone
Some straggling beam on cliff or stone,
With such a glimpse as prophet's eye
Gains on thy depth, Futurity.
No murmur waked the solemn still,
Save tinkling of a fountain rill;
But when the wind chafed with the lake,
A sullen sound would upward break,
With dashing hollow voice, that spoke
The incessant war of wave and rock." *

The pathos that was deep down in the heart of Scott comes out strikingly in the Introduction to the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' in the lines on the aged harper, in 'Hellvellyn,' the 'Coronach,' the touching 'Pibroch of Donald Dhu,' the 'Macgregor's Gathering,' the lines on 'Time' in the 'Antiquary,' and in those lines, prompted by the consciousness of his own

* *Lady of the Lake*, Canto III., st. 26.

declining powers, written at that Cauldshield's Loch whither he had so often repaired in the prime of his joyous strength. And there is a terrible pathos in the moral of the 'Eve of St John.'

Here he touches the chord of sympathy between outward nature and human feeling, and fuses the two as only the poetic heart can do.

"Call it not vain: they do not err,
Who say, that when the Poet dies,
Mute nature mourns her worshipper,
And celebrates his obsequies:
Who say, tall cliff and cavern lone
For the departed bard make moan;
That mountains weep in crystal rill;
That flowers in tears of balm distil;
Through his loved groves that breezes sigh,
And oaks in deeper groan reply;
And rivers teach their rushing wave
To murmur dirges round his grave." *

TIME.

"'Why sitt'st thou by that ruin'd hall,
Thou aged carle so stern and grey?
Dost thou its former pride recall,
Or ponder how it pass'd away?'

* *Lay of the Last Minstrel.*

'Know'st thou not me?' the Deep Voice cried;
'So long enjoy'd, so oft misused—
Alternate, in thy fickle pride,
Desired, neglected, and accused?

'Before my breath, like blazing flax,
Man and his marvels pass away!
And changing empires wane and wax,
Are founded, flourish, and decay.

'Redeem mine hours—the space is brief—
While in my glass the sand-grains shiver,
And measureless thy joy or grief,
When Time and thou shalt part for ever!'"

In pathos and pictorial power alike, Scott has given us nothing finer than this:—

"Autumn departs—but still his mantle's fold
Rests on the groves of noble Somerville,
Beneath a shroud of russet dropp'd with gold
Tweed and his tributaries mingle still;
Hoarser the wind, and deeper sounds the rill,
Yet lingering notes of silvan music swell,
The deep-toned cushat and the red-breast shrill;
And yet some tints of summer splendour tell
When the broad sun sinks down on Ettrick's
western fell.

Autumn departs—from Gala's fields no more
Come rural sounds our kindred banks to cheer;
Blent with the stream, and gale that wafts it o'er,
No more the distant reaper's mirth we hear.
The last blithe shout hath died upon our ear,
And harvest-home hath hush'd the clanging wain;
On the waste hill no forms of life appear,
Save where, sad laggard of the autumnal train,
Some age-struck wanderer gleans few ears of scatter'd grain.

Deem'st thou these sadden'd scenes have pleasure still,
Lov'st thou through Autumn's fading realms to stray,
To see the heath-flower wither'd on the hill,
To listen to the wood's expiring lay,
To note the red leaf shivering on the spray,
To mark the last bright tints the mountain stain,
On the waste fields to trace the gleaner's way,
And moralise on mortal joy and pain?—
O! if such scenes thou lov'st, scorn not the minstrel strain." *

* *Lord of the Isles*, Canto I., Introduction.

The subduing power of nature is thus finely touched :—

"The wild-rose, eglantine, and broom
Wasted around their rich perfume;
The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm,
The aspens slept beneath the calm;
The silver light, with quivering glance,
Play'd on the water's still expanse,—
Wild were the hearts whose passion's sway
Could rage beneath the sober ray!" *

The power of contrast—the subtle transition from one state to its opposite,—from life to death, joy to sorrow, prosperity to adversity,—in our experience, is strongly characteristic of Scott. Not less are the contrasts of motion and repose in his descriptions, and of light and shade in his colouring. This subtlety of placing together opposites is really at the root of the genius of Scott.

Thus in the 'Coronach' :—

"He is gone on the mountain,
He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
When our need was the sorest.

* *Lady of the Lake*, Canto I., st. 35.

The font, reappearing,
From the rain-drops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
To Duncan no morrow!
The hand of the reaper
Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory.
The autumn winds rushing
Waft the leaves that are serest,
But our flower was in flushing,
When blighting was nearest.

Fleet foot on the correi,
Sage counsel in cumber;
Red hand in the foray,
How sound is thy slumber!
Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain,
Thou art gone, and for ever!"*

The following illustrates the power of contrast in colour:—

* *Lady of the Lake*, Canto III., st. 16.

"Then Roderick from the Douglas broke—
As flashes flame through sable smoke,
Kindling its wreaths, long, dark, and low,
To one broad blaze of ruddy glow,
So the deep anguish of despair
Burst, in fierce jealousy, to air." *

Again:—

"Fair as the earliest beam of eastern light,
When first, by the bewilder'd pilgrim spied,
It smiles upon the dreary brow of night,
And silvers o'er the torrent's foaming tide,
And lights the fearful path on mountain side;—
Fair as that beam, although the fairest far,
Giving to horror grace, to danger pride,
Shine martial Faith, and Courtesy's bright star,
Through all the wreckful storms that cloud the brow of War." †

Again:—

"Rearing their crests amid the cloudless skies,
And darkly clustering in the pale moonlight,
Toledo's holy towers and spires arise,
As from a trembling lake of silver white.

* *Lady of the Lake,* Canto II., st. 34.
† *Ibid.*, Canto V., st. 1.

Their mingled shadows intercept the sight
Of the broad burial-ground outstretch'd below,
And nought disturbs the silence of the night,—
All sleeps in sullen shade, or silver glow;
All save the heavy swell of Teio's ceaseless flow.

All save the rushing swell of Teio's tide,
Or, distant heard, a courser's neigh or tramp;
Their changing rounds as watchful horsemen ride,
To guard the limits of King Roderick's camp.
For, through the river's night-fog rolling damp,
Was many a proud pavilion dimly seen,
Which glimmer'd back, against the moon's fair lamp,
Tissues of silk and silver twisted sheen,
And standards proudly pitch'd, and warders arm'd between."*

In 'The Lord of the Isles' (1814)—just when he was feeling that the popular tide of favour for his poetry was beginning to ebb, and he was

* *Vision of Don Roderick.*

now thinking of the new and splendid venture which began with 'Waverley'—we have a description which seems to me to be the highest reach of Scott in the sphere of insight into nature, and sublime sympathy with its transcendent power. He had not before written anything so absolutely free and grand, and he never again approached it:—

"Stranger! if e'er thine ardent step hath traced
The northern realms of ancient Caledon,
Where the proud Queen of Wilderness hath placed,
By lake and cataract, her lonely throne;
Sublime but sad delight thy soul hath known,
Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle's cry,
And with the sounding lake, and with the moaning sky.

. . . . . .

Such are the scenes, where savage grandeur wakes
An awful thrill that softens into sighs;
Such feelings rouse them by dim Rannoch's lakes,

In dark Glencoe such gloomy raptures rise:
Or further, where, beneath the northern skies,
Chides wild Loch Eribol his caverns hoar,—
But, be the minstrel judge, they yield the prize
Of desert dignity to that dread shore,
That sees grim Coolin rise, and hears Coriskin roar." *

No one in Scottish, even in English, literature, before these lines were written, had shown such a sympathy for mountains—their savage grandeur and overpowering loneliness—and certainly no one had so perfectly expressed it. Since this date (1814), and chiefly through the influence of Wordsworth, "the power of hills" has grown, and touched many hearts, and yielded perhaps deeper lessons, more spiritual insight, than they conveyed to the mind of Scott. But his was the earliest vision, and there has been none more sympathetic or intense.

Such was the feeling for the Lowland and Highland scenery of Scotland which flowed into the world as almost a new atmosphere, through the inspiration of Walter Scott. We

* *Lord of the Isles*, Canto IV., st. 1.

may pause for a moment to note the progress in this appreciation which had taken place from the beginning, and past even the middle, of the eighteenth century. We have seen how Johnson looked at and felt Highland scenery. His attitude was but a continuation, in a form intensified by his peculiar individuality, of that manifested towards scenery of the kind from the time of Queen Anne downwards. "Goldsmith," we are told, "looked upon the scenery of the Highlands as rather ridiculously hideous and dismal. . . . What Goldsmith expressed, all the scholars of Queen Anne's day believed in their inmost minds." *

But there were signs of the dawn of a new and better feeling towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Several travellers from England had penetrated into Scotland, and being open-minded men of some natural susceptibility, began to feel the power of the scenery. Some Scots, too, had gone into the Highlands after the quietude that fell on them from the savage repressions following Culloden, and they, too, had come under the power of mountain, glen, and cataract. The feeling was rising and

* Hamerton, *Landscape Art*, pp. 90, 91.

gathering strength, when Scott took his ride into Perthshire, and came under the full power of Glenartney and the Trossachs.

One of the Englishmen who visited Scotland at this latter period, most memorable for a growing appreciation of the scenery, was the Rev. William Gilpin, prebendary of Salisbury, and vicar of Boldre, in the New Forest, near Lymington.* From his surroundings of the New Forest and Salisbury Plain, we should hardly have expected the Prebendary to show much appreciation of the Highland scenery of Scotland. Yet it was so. He was clearly a man with large natural susceptibility, and he was obviously educated, in the course of his journeyings through Scotland, to eventually a real sense of the scenery, even in its wildest aspects. Possibly it was that, as a southern Englishman born and educated, he found in Scottish scenery a contrast to all he had before seen and known, and thus was led through his openness of soul to feel it more purely and intensely. He cer-

* See *Observations relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, made in the year* 1776, *on several parts of Great Britain, particularly the Highlands of Scotland.* By William Gilpin, M.A., Prebendary of Salisbury, and Vicar of Boldre, in the New Forest, near Lymington. London: 1792. 2 vols.

tainly was a greatly broader-minded man than Samuel Johnson, who was in Scotland only some ten years before him. The defect of Gilpin is, that he sets out with certain preconceived ideas of "the picturesque"—that is, of what is fit for painting. These, too, were derived mainly from the tame and homely English landscape art of the period. Everything was to be judged by certain conventional subjects and rules, as thus exemplified. Art was not to be expanded to the breadth of nature, but nature was to be cramped within the limits of existing art. We may understand the character of Gilpin's drawings in Scotland from the following acknowledgment in his Preface: "I have heretofore made confession to the public that when I have seen a line out of place [that is, in nature], I have a great propensity to correct it by one that is more picturesque." *

Gilpin passed up both Tweed and Teviot—at least, up the lower reaches of these streams—and his remarks on the Border hills from his superior standpoint may amuse the modern reader, in the light of subsequent feeling and poetry:—

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. ii.: *Account of the Prints.*

"At Ferney [he must mean Fernielee] we had a grand scene of mountain perspective. It is not often that these elevated bodies coincide with the rules of beauty and composition—less often indeed than any other mode of landscape. In a level country, the awkwardness of a line is hid. But the mountain rearing its opakeness against the sky, shows every fault both in its delineation and combination with great exactness. These mountains, however, had few faults to show. They were both well formed and well connected, and showed also in great perfection the beauties of gradation—gradation in form, gradation in light, and gradation in colour. With these adjuncts, which are among the most beautiful in landscape, the exhibition could not but be pleasing. One of the nearest of these mountains was encircled, when we saw it, with a deep purple tint, which did not seem the production of any vegetable substance, but rather some enamelled mineral stain." *

Speaking of the country from Hawick down the Teviot:—

"Here, too, in general, the mountains formed beautiful lines; but, as in history-painting,

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. i. pp. 51, 52.

figures without drapery and other appendages make but an indifferent group, so in scenery, naked mountains form poor composition. They require the drapery of a little wood to break the simplicity of their shapes, to produce contrasts, to connect one part with another, and to give that richness in landscape which is one of its greatest ornaments." *

The Modern Athenian may perhaps be surprised to read the following view of "mine own romantic town:"—

"A nearer approach [from Dalkeith] did not give us a more pleasing idea of the environs of Edinburgh. We had always heard it represented as one of the most picturesque towns in Britain; but people often consider romantic and picturesque as synonymous.

"Arthur's Seat appears still as odd, misshapen, and uncouth as when we first saw it. It gave us the idea of a cap of maintenance in heraldry; and a view with such a glaring feature in it can no more be picturesque than a face with a bulbous nose can be beautiful. The town and castle, indeed, on the left, make some amends, and are happily introduced." † Nature apparently in its

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. i. p. 50. † *Ibid.*, p. 59.

work had an eye for a picture, and it fortunately, on this particular occasion, just to the left, suited the wit of Mr Gilpin.

All Scottish scenery, according to the Prebendary and to truth, is affected by lights, shades, mists, so that in point of shape, size, distance, two persons may give very different accounts of the same mountain, and yet both may be very exact.*

There is composition in the mountains of Scotland :—

"an art,
Or seeming art, which, by position apt,
Arranges shapes unequal, so to save
That correspondent poise, which unpreserved
Would mock our gaze with airy vacancy." †

"The use of mountains is, (1) to close a distance by fine outline; (2) to come in as a second ground overhanging a lake. The distances of Scotland are well adapted to these two ends. The distances in Scotland are always bounded by a grand chain of blue mountains." ‡

But Mr Gilpin is very dubious and trembling

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. ii. pp. 144, 145.
† *Ibid.*, p. 128. ‡ *Ibid.*

in his judgment. He says, after praise, "I have, however, heard good judges in landscape find much fault with the Scotch mountains in general, and place them on the wrong side of a comparison with the mountains of Italy and other countries." *

The lakes of Scotland, according to Mr Gilpin, are not sufficiently wooded along their margins; and they are dirty—that is, mossy—in colour, in comparison with the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, which admit the light many fathoms below their surface. †

Gilpin admits that the streams of Scotland are very beautiful. They are all, according to him, mountain-streams, and their channels are commonly fretted in rock. Their descent is rapid and broken. They are true classical rivers:—

> "De cursu rapido de montibus altis,
> Dant sonitum spumosi."

"Their banks, we allow, are seldom wooded—often, indeed, without the least fringe; but where they are fortunate enough to find accompaniments of this kind, as they sometimes do,

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. ii. p. 128. † *Ibid.*, p. 130.

they form scenes which, perhaps, no other country can boast. Among their beauties are their frequent cascades, which are generally of the broken kind. Sheets of water are rarely found. Their common properties are admirably described in the following lines of a Scotch bard :—

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't."

The Prebendary of Sarum, with all his defects of insight and sympathy, was an advanced man for his time. And on his vision there dawned at least some gleam of God's earth and sky as we have it at our doors. He was a most respectable specimen of English culture, thrown into the midst of the dazzlement of a new world, which impressed him with its power, and yet transcended his limitations of perception and upbringing. Yet he had soul and reverence to feel that there was a power there which he did not quite grasp, while at the same time he felt it to be real and true. There are but few men in the

world who like to have their conventional crust quite broken through.

And I think we ought to forgive the shortcomings of the Prebendary — sins they were not—for telling us that "one genuine Scotch torrent is fairly worth all the serpentine rivers in England." * This is most true, even if you throw into the scale "The Serpentine" itself.

Then we are glad to know that the spruce has

"The shadowy bough of floating foliage."

And we have a sympathetic word for the pine,—that which was at the heart of Scott when he spoke of the

"Land of brown heath and shaggy wood."

"After all, however," he adds, "I know not whether the pine race are not, in a picturesque light, more adapted to the ruggedness of the country than the deciduous tree, which is more suited to the sylvan scene." †

And I do think the worthy Prebendary is to be thanked for the following, though I fear the lesson is not likely to be greatly read or prized.

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. ii. p. 141. † *Ibid.*, p. 126.

"Ceres, Triptolemus, and all the worthies who introduced corn and tillage, deserve unquestionably the thanks of mankind. Far be it from me to disturb their statues, or erase their inscriptions. But we must, at the same time, acknowledge that they have miserably scratched and injured the face of the globe. Wherever man appears with his tools, deformity follows his steps. His spade and his plough, his hedge and his furrow, make shocking encroachments on the simplicity and elegance of landscape. The old acorn-season was unquestionably the reign of picturesque beauty; when nature planted her own woods and laid out her own lawns:

'immunis, rastroque intacta, nec ullis
Saucia vomeribus.'" *

* Gilpin, *The Picturesque*, vol. ii. p. 112.

CHAPTER XX.

MODERN PERIOD: JAMES HOGG.

(1770-1835.)

James Hogg (1770-1835) is, in the last hundred years, the third great name of the poets of the Borderland. Born in a cottage near Ettrick Kirk, well up in Ettrickdale, a little above the spot where the head-waters of the Ettrick and the Tima meet, Hogg was destined to the life of a shepherd. His early herding was at Blackhouse on the Yarrow, and then at Willan's Lee on the Leithen. Two localities more fitted to nourish a genius open to the heart of solitude, the soft greenery of the haughs of the waters, and the power of the hills, could not be found in the south of Scotland. And there is not in all Border history a more complete type of a man of susceptibility

and power nourished by the Border glens and streams, haughs and hills, story, ballad, and tradition, than the Ettrick Shepherd. Six months' schooling was all that he ever got; all that he acquired further was by his own little-aided effort. He taught himself, in truth, to read, to write, and to rhyme.

When Scott wrote the description of St Mary's Lake which I have quoted, he had seen it only once. But so completely and minutely did one scene in which he was interested take hold of eye and imagination, that this one view was enough—enough to enable him to crystallise the picture for all time. Scott's pictures of scenery are all remarkable for breadth and finish; there is nothing essential omitted, nothing irrelevant, out of harmony, introduced. But we may have picturing of natural scenery which is not so perfectly finished as that of Scott, and yet is true, faithful, impressive, and suggestive. The man who lives in a locality, and who has eye and soul in him, will note features which the visitor, however gifted, does not note; and he will often in a word, an epithet, a phrase, bring before you a feature, even a whole scene, which no mere art can so power-

fully effect. This general remark applies, I think, with some truth to the Ettrick Shepherd and his portraiture of the Yarrow. I do not say that James Hogg has not left us finished pictures of scenery; but it seems to me that the special power of Hogg's pictures lies in the noting and suggesting features of earth and sky, which only a dweller in the vale—perhaps only a poetic shepherd on the hills—could have observed and felt. We know how Hogg loved the Ettrick and the Yarrow, how they touched and moulded his fancy and his feelings from his earliest days, when as a child he opened his eyes on the green pastoral solitudes of Ettrick, till, after a chequered career, he closed them at Altrive, within the hearing of the Yarrow. There, in the vale and on the hills of Yarrow, he spent the greater part of his life as shepherd and farmer. "For ae third of the twenty-four hours," he is made to say, "tak' ae day wi' anither throughout the year, I'm i' the open air, wi' heaven's wind and rain perhaps, or its hail and sleet—and they are blest by the Hand that sends them—blashing against me on the hill." He had known the Yarrow and been especially under its power from the time he

was twenty, and even before. For ten years he herded on Blackhouse—from 1790 to 1800—and he knew the valley and the district in all its changeful moods,—in spring-tide, in summer gleam, in autumn's purple and in its mellowing reds and browns; he had seen the sunrise in all its forms over the hills—sometimes glowing, sometimes gleaming red through the rain; he had been out o' nights on the moors, both in hours of summer calm and in times of winter tempest; he had brooded over the vale filled with moonlight, and eyed it as the thunder-storm swept downwards, dark and lurid, from Cramalt and Clockmore; he had exulted in the rack of the clouds as they swept the darkened sky. He was thus familiar with every look of the heavens and the earth, and he had the soul to note, to feel, and to treasure. Thus it is that in the descriptions of the Yarrow by Hogg we have, above all, characteristic features which only an impassioned shepherd on the hills could have known and noted. Look closely at his descriptions, and this will be found true:—

"The Bard on Ettrick's mountains green
In Nature's bosom nursed had been,

And oft had marked, in forest lone,
Her beauties on her mountain throne;
Had seen her deck the wild-wood tree,
And star with snowy gems the lea;
In loveliest colours paint the plain,
And sow the moor with purple grain;
By golden mead and mountain sheer,
Had viewed the Ettrick waving clear,
Where shadowy flocks of purest snow
Seemed grazing in a world below.
. . . . . .
Oft had he viewed, as morning rose,
The bosom of the lonely Lowes,
Ploughed far by many a downy keel,
Of wild-duck and of vagrant teal.
Oft thrilled his heart at close of even,
To see the dappled vales of heaven,
With many a mountain, moor, and tree,
Asleep upon the Saint Mary."

Again, what can be truer than this, or what more touching? Speaking of the old kirk and kirkyard of St Mary's, he says:—

"O lone St Mary of the waves,
In ruin lies thine ancient aisle,
While o'er thy green and lowly graves
The moorcocks bay and plovers wail;

But mountain spirits on the gale
Oft o'er thee sound the requiem dread,
And warrior shades, and spectres pale,
Still linger by the quiet dead."

And here, in the description of a ride of a band of reivers through the night up the Yarrow, we have a picture of sunrise thoroughly characteristic:—

"When they came nigh St Mary's Lake,
The day-sky glimmered on the dew;
They hid their horses in the brake,
And lurked in heath and bracken cleugh.

. . . . . .

The dark cock bayed above the coomb,
Throned 'mid the wavy fringe of gold,
Unwreathed from dawning's fairy loom,
In many a soft vermilion fold.

The tiny skiffs of silver mist
Lingered along the slumbering vale;
Belled the grey stag with fervid breast
High on the moors of Meggat-dale." *

The Laird of Hawkshaw — Porteous — had

* *Mary Scott*, in *The Wake*.

been harried of ewes and kye by Ringan's Rab of Thorlberrye. Pate Porteous was too proud to brook this, and he followed the reivers across the hills from Tweedsmuir to Tarras:—

"They spurred owre moss, owre muir an' fell,
Till mony a naig he swaif'd away;
At length they wan the Tarras moss,
An' lighted at the skreigh o' day.

The stots came rowtin' up the bent,
Tossin' their white horns to the sun;
'Now, by my sooth,' Pate Porteous cried,
'My owsen will be hard to won.'" *

Or is there picture finer than this of the silent, almost obedient, passing of the powers of heaven before a greater power than themselves?—

"Till the stars of heaven fell calmly away,
Like the flakes of snow on a winter day."

While Leyden opened up the scenery of the Borderland with a faithfulness and a fulness not known before, and while Scott revealed its story and raised it to lofty romance, Hogg caught

* *The Tweeddale Raid.*

especially the supernatural side of Border tradition and fancy, and disclosed this to the world in imaginative forms, strictly in harmony with the conditions of ideal creation. The land of Fairy which had hovered on the margin of Border life and feeling all through the centuries, and now and again had flashed upon the vision of the solitary seer, was the sphere in which Hogg revelled; and he it was who, more than any other modern Border poet, made it charming and attractive, as a heaven of imagination. Thither it was that he transported Kilmeny—the pure of earth to dwell with the pure in a transcendent heaven—and there, in the light of a sunless day, she had been laid in the stream of life,

"Thát her youth and beauty never might fade."

Hogg had a sense of the supernatural and the weird, bound up with a mysterious feeling of limitlessness and indefinitude that haunted him in his thoughts about this world and our earthly life. The forms of another mysterious world, very near to this earth of ours, were seemingly present to his imagination, and constituted almost a part of his belief. This consciousness

was the atmosphere in which he lived as a boy, and it influenced his whole life and much of his poetry. It was nourished by his solitary life as a shepherd on the hills of Yarrow, and his surroundings there, through his later years. To the Ettrick Shepherd, the weird forms revealed and withdrawn amid the dim and shifting mists with which he was familiar at dawn and gloamin' were real and powerful influences on his feelings and imagination—

"the mystic shadows dim
Which round the car of twilight swim."

Above all, he was alive to those suggestions of a mysterious sphere of being that come to the man who of a night has watched the pearly grey of the weather-gleam, as it stretches along the wavy lines of the Border hills, with the dark sky above it and the dim heights beneath,—the outer rim, as it were, of a strange gleaming world, partially revealed, and for ever beckoning to the imagination. This was in Hogg's mind when he wrote the lines:—

"I am a king, my regal sway
Stretches o'er Scotia's mountains high,
And o'er the fairy vales that lie

Beneath the glimpses of the moon,
Or round the ledges of the sky,
In twilight's everlasting noon."

The fusion of the weird and supernatural with the scenes of the world of outward nature was the essence of the genius of Hogg—not power of story, as with Scott, or symbolism, as with Wordsworth, but the constant touch of the invisible world on this earth of ours. And no one has in those times done it more powerfully, or with more consciousness of the reality of the supernatural side. Witness that picture in 'Kilmeny':—

"Late, late in a gloamin', when all was still,
When the fringe was red on the western hill,
The wood was sere, the moon i' the wane,
The reek o' the cot hung over the plain
Like a little wee cloud in the world its lane;
When the ingle lowed wi' an eery leme,
Late, late in the gloamin' Kilmeny came hame."

Again, in 'The Pedlar,' on the night ere his murder was done:—

"'Twas late, late, late on a Saturday's night,
The moon was set, an' the wind was lown;
The lazy mist crap down frae the height,
An' the dim blue lowe glimmered laigh on the downe.

O'er the rank-scented fen the bleeter was warping,
High on the black muir the foxes did howl,
All by the lone hearth the cricket sat harping,
And far on the air came the notes of the owl.

The linn it was routing adown frae the height,
An' the water was soughin' sae goustilye:
O it was sic an eerriesome Saturday night,
As ane in a lifetime hardly wad see." *

In 'May of the Moril Glen,'—the maiden enchantress,—we have the stanzas that follow:—

"Some said she was found in a fairy ring,
And born of the Fairy Queen;
For there was a rainbow behind the moon
That night she first was seen.

. . . . . .

* *The Pedlar.*

And the masons who biggit that wild ha' house
Ne'er spoke word good nor ill;
They came like a dream, and passed away
Like shadows o'er the hill.

. . . . . .

Like carry owre the morning sun
That shimmers to the wind,
So flew her locks upon the gale,
And streamed afar behind.

. . . . . .

Then there were chariots came o'er night,
As silent and as soon
As shadow of ane little cloud
In the wan light of the moon.

Some said they came out of the rock,
And some out of the sea;
And some said they were sent from hell,
To bring that fair ladye.

When the day sky began to frame
The grizzly eastern fell,
And the little wee bat was bound to seek
His dark and eery cell,

The fairest flower of mortal frame
Passed from the Moril Glen;
And ne'er may such a deadly eye
Shine amongst Christian men!

In seven chariots, gilded bright,
The train went o'er the fell,
All wrapt within ane shower of hail;
Whither no man could tell."

Here is a picture of the Cheviot:—

"Then, let our pilgrim footsteps seek
Old Cheviot's pathless mossy peak;
For there the Mountain Spirit still
Lingers around the lonely hill,
To guard his wizard grottos hoar,
Where Cimbrian sages dwelt of yore;
Or, shrouded in his robes of mist,
Ascends the mountain's shaggy breast,
To seize his fearful seat upon
The elf-enchanted Hanging Stone,
And count the kindred streams that stray
Through the broad regions of his sway;
Fair sister streams, that wind afar
By bloomy bank or barren scaur,

Now hidden by the clustering brake,
Now lost amid the mountain lake,
Now clasping, with protecting sweep,
Some mouldering castle's moated steep,
Till, issuing from the uplands brown,
Fair rolls each flood by tower and town;
The hills recede, and on the sight
Swell the bold rivers broad and bright." *

There is a wonderful melody and touch of pathos in the stanzas at the close of 'The Wake:'—

" The wreath lies on St Mary's shore,
The mountain sounds are harsh and loud;
The lofty brows of stern Clockmore
Are visored with the moving cloud.

But winter's deadly hues shall fade
On moorland bald and mountain shaw,
And soon the rainbow's lovely shade
Sleep on the breast of Bowerhope Law.

Then will the glowing suns of spring,
The genial shower and stealing dew,
Wake every forest bird to sing,
And every mountain flower renew.

* *Poetic Mirror: Epistle to Mr R. S.*

But not the rainbow's ample ring,
That spans the glen and mountain grey,
Though fanned by western breeze's wing,
And sunned by summer's glowing ray,

To man decayed, can ever more
Renew the age of love and glee!
Can ever second spring restore
To my old mountain harp and me!

But when the hue of softened green
Spreads over hill and lonely lea,
And lowly primrose opes unseen
Her virgin bosom to the bee;

When hawthorns breathe their odours far,
And carols hail the year's return;
And daisy spreads her silver star,
Unheeded, by the mountain burn;

Then will I seek the aged thorn,
The haunted wild and fairy ring,
Where oft thy erring numbers borne,
Have taught the wandering winds to sing."

The inner heart of the Ettrick Shepherd, the main inspiration and cast of his genius, are re-

vealed in the poem on 'Superstition.' This is one of the most perfect of his compositions; and though it shows his inequalities it has fewer than usual, and has none of his actual sinkings to vulgarisms and commonplace. It is in many respects an exquisite poem, alike in feeling, imagery, and rhythm. It shows, especially, the kind of spiritualism in which he clothed the outward world, different in many ways from that of Wordsworth, yet still a spiritualism that kept hold of a surrounding supersensible sphere, the ultimate relation of that world to a supreme Power, the antagonism to the opinion of the

> "Earth-born Sadducee,
> That earth is all our hope and heritage,"—

the strength which a belief in Providence gives to the shepherd of the hills in the perils of the winter storm. The Ettrick Shepherd, in truth, was an idealist, a man who lived far more under the power of "the world of vision,"—the insight of high imagining,—than in that of ordinary reality; and he is at his best when he is out of himself, so to speak, and soaring in that strange supersensible region whence forms and "things of unearthly make" visited him with a

thrilling and subduing power. The stanzas following illustrate these points; and they show also the truth of the remark already made, that Hogg had an eye and ear for the aspects and the sounds of the moorland and the mountain, which furnished him with natural images and impressions wholly his own, fresh, direct, and new:—

"Be mine to sing of visions that have been,
And cherish hope of visions yet to be;
Of mountains clothed in everlasting green,
Of silver torrent and of shadowy tree,
Far in the ocean of eternity.
Be mine the faith that spurns the bourn of time;
The soul whose eye can future glories see;
The converse here with things of purer clime,
And hope above the stars that soars on wing sublime.

But she is gone that thrilled the simple minds
Of those I loved and honoured to the last;
She who gave voices to the wandering winds,
And mounted spirits on the midnight blast;
At her behest the trooping fairies passed,
And wayward elves in many a glimmering band;

The mountains teemed with life, and sore aghast
Stood maid and matron 'neath her mystic wand,
When all the spirits rose and walked at her command.

. . . . . .

Oh! I have bowed to her resistless sway,
When the thin evening vapours floated nigh;
When the grey plover's wailings died away,
And the tall mountains melted into sky:
The note of gloaming bee that journeyed by
Sent through my heart a momentary knell;
And sore I feared in bush or brake might lie
Things of unearthly make—for I knew well
That hour with danger fraught more than when midnight fell.

But oh! if ancient cemetery was near,
Or cairn of harper murdered long ago,
Or wandering pedlar for his hoarded gear,
Of such, what glen of Scotland doth not know?
Or grave of suicide, upon the brow
Of the bleak mountain, withered all and grey;
From these I held as from some deadly foe:

There have I quaked by night and mused by day;
But chiefly where I weened the bard or warrior lay.

For many a wild heart-thrilling Scottish bard,
In Lowland dale the lyre of heaven that wooed,
Sleeps 'neath some little mound or lonely sward,
Where humble dome of rapt devotion stood;
'Mid heathy wastes by Mary's silent flood,
Or in the moorland glen of dark Buccleuch.
There o'er their graves the heath-fowl's mottled brood
Track with light feathery foot the morning dew;
There plays the gamesome lamb, or bleats the yeaning ewe.

. . . . . .

Long did thy fairies linger in the wild,
When vale and city wholly were resigned;
Where hoary cliffs o'er little holms were piled,
And torrents sung their music to the wind;
The darksome heaven upon the hills reclined

Save when a transient sunbeam through the rain
Passed, like some beauteous phantom of the mind,
Leaving the hind in solitude again—
These were their last retreats, and heard their parting strain.

. . . . . .

Oh! I remember, as young fancy grew,
How oft thou spok'st in voice of distant rill;
What sheeted forms thy plastic finger drew,
Throned on the shadow of the moonlit hill,
Or in the glade so motionless and still
That scarcely in this world I seemed to be;
High on the tempest sing thine anthem shrill;
Across the heaven upon the meteor flee;
Or in the thunder speak with voice of majesty!

All these are gone—the days of vision o'er;
The bard of fancy strikes a tuneless string.
Oh! if I wist to meet thee here no more,
My muse should wander, on unwearied wing,
To find thy dwelling by some lonely spring,
Where Norway opes her forests to the gale;
The dell thy home, the cloud thy covering;

The tuneful sea-maid, and the spectre pale,
Tending thy gloomy throne, amid heaven's awful veil.

. . . . . .

Oh! let me quake before thee once again,
And take one farewell on my bended knee,
Great ruler of the soul, which none can rule like thee!" *

Surely these lines are true of the Shepherd :—

" dear
Was vision of 'the dappled vales of heaven,'
With mountain-side and tree, at evening fall,
Upon the Loch's calm breast, that slept and dreamed
A quiet gloamin' dream of earth and sky!
Yet strange things all and stern to him were joys,—
The moving cloud that visored stern Clockmore,
When Cramalt, gathering all her rainy springs,
Poured wild and wayward from her skyey crag,
Not heeding grassy nook or heather brae,
Where she had lingered through the summer time.

* *Superstition.*

He loved, as only poet's heart can love,
The flashing levin and the winter storm,
And Yarrow's flooded roar, and sounds dim heard
Of airy tumult 'mid the driving mist."

CHAPTER XXI.

MODERN PERIOD: JOHN WILSON AND OTHERS.

(1788–1854.)

JOHN WILSON (1788-1854) was born in Paisley, and died in Edinburgh at the age of sixty-six. He was educated at the University of Glasgow, and at Magdalene College, Oxford, which he entered in 1803. There he gained the Newdigate prize for the English poem. He purchased, and went to reside at, Elleray, on Windermere, in 1807. This continued to be his principal place of summer residence during life, the centre, at least, of his far and wide summer wanderings. In 1820 he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, an office which he held for thirty years, resigning it in 1851.

Forty years ago "Christopher North" was

a familiar and striking figure on the streets of Edinburgh, and one has still a vivid image of him, manly and picturesque, with a dash of singularity in dress and appearance, befitting and not unexpected, as he passed daily, early in the winter afternoon, from the University, along the Bridges and by Princes Street, to "Blackwood's" or his house in Gloucester Place. There was about him the interest of one of the great literary personages of the first half of the century, now no longer quite what he was in power, but personally regarded with a sympathetic enthusiasm. As a student of his in his latter days, one cherishes a kindly and grateful memory of "the old man eloquent." Wilson has added to the inspiring and interesting associations which link the literary and social Edinburgh of the past to the city of to-day. Hamilton, Chalmers, and Wilson might be seen on its streets at the same time; and Edinburgh is the richer for the memories of such a rare combination of men. Three such typical personalities have not been together in Edinburgh since their day.

Wilson's poetical career after the Newdigate Poem was first marked by an Elegy on the

death of James Grahame, the author of 'The Sabbath,' which attracted the favourable notice of Joanna Baillie and Walter Scott. In 'The Annual Register' of 1812 appeared stanzas by him, under the title of 'The Magic Mirror.' In the same year there appeared 'The Isle of Palms, and other Poems;' and in 1816, 'The City of the Plague.' These are his only considerable poetical efforts. Shortly afterwards, Wilson turned to prose, or rather prose-poetry, and gave to the world 'Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life,' 'The Foresters,' 'The Trials of Margaret Lyndsay.' From 1817, the date of the commencement of 'Blackwood's Magazine,' Wilson devoted the best powers of his mind to contributions to this serial, gave its character, made it what it was. He continued to write for the 'Magazine,' with slight interruptions, until his death in 1854.

Few men have given higher promise of imaginative excellence, of poetic power, than Wilson did in those years from 1812 to 1820. It cannot be said that this high promise was fulfilled. His genius was no doubt more of the passionate and susceptible kind than of the intellectual or reflective, or of that form of

imaginative power which inspires moral and spiritual insight into the circumstances and the problems of human life and nature. When he abandoned verse, he was able to throw himself with equal intensity of energy into the prose of the 'Tales' and the 'Noctes,' and possibly with a greater sense of ease and freedom. But it is to be regretted that he so early gave up poetry: there was the soul of the true poet in him. Few men, in fact, have shown intenser natural power and passion. With continuous work, the artistic sense would have become finer; there would have been less diffuseness, more point and concentration; what is residual in his characterising and picturing would have fallen out of view; and his finely sensuous imagination would have given him a high poetic rank. Unfortunately, he lacked continuity of effort in poetry and in the work of life. From 1820, the date of his appointment to the Chair of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh, he did a great mass of literary work; but it was the result of broken and desultory effort, and in a line that sought to satisfy the wants of the hour, and tended rather to bring out than to repress what was over-copious and exuberant. Still,

we bless Wilson for the 'Noctes,' for all their power of dramatic imagination, their wealth of poetic imagery, their wit, humour, even pathos; their personalities and coarsenesses we may now pass by and forget.

The feature, almost the outstanding feature, of Wilson, whether in verse or in prose form, is his absolute love of nature, and especially his enthusiasm for all the wilder and grander scenes of his native land and the district of the English lakes. His early boyish life on the moorland of the Mearns in Renfrewshire, his youthful life at Elleray, and his prolonged sojourn there amid the waters and the mountains, the dales and the gleaming streams of that enchanted land, quickened in him an intensity of love and enthusiasm for outward nature. His early days in the Lake District were the most enthusiastic and real of his life. He tells us—

"Frequent, for years, among the lonely glens
I wandered lonely, like a pilgrim sad,
O'er mountains known but to the eagle's gaze;
Yet my hushed heart, with nature's beauty glad,
Slept in the shade, or gloried in the blaze.

Romantic vales stole winding to my eye
In gradual loveliness, like rising dreams;
Fair nameless tarns, that seem to blend with sky
Rocks of wild majesty, and elfin streams." *

And, as we know from his life by his daughter, Mrs Gordon, he was in the habit, under an impulse not strange in such a nature as his, to start for the mountains at night, and walk till the sun rose, with all the intensely varying enjoyment which only one who has had the experience can in the least realise.

"For witness, Thou!
O Mighty One! whose saving love has stolen,
On the deep peace of moonbeams, to my heart—
Thou who, with looks of mercy, oft hast cheered
The starry silence, when, at noon of night,
On some wild mountain, Thou hast not declined
The homage of Thy lonely worshipper."

I do not know a more enviable lot than that of Wilson at Elleray in that year, 1807. He had youth, health, a grand physique, fortune, and native genius, and he seemed destined to travel through life

* Sonnet VIII., *Poems*, 1825.

"like a summer sun,
Itself all glory and its path all joy."

But somehow the noonday splendour was never reached.

Of the prospect from his cottage at Elleray he wrote:—

"I shall see,
Even at my dying hour, the glorious sun
That made Winander one wide wave of gold,
When first, in transport from the mountain-top
I hailed the heavenly vision!"

In no man of this century was the love of nature stronger, and, so far as the direct feeling for the outward world goes, no one has expressed it more beautifully and powerfully. In his love for the mountains, Wilson was one in heart with Byron; and in his sympathy and purity of feeling for the simple flowers of the wayside, the daisy, the primrose, and the starwort, he was akin in soul to the earlier mood of Wordsworth.

It has been well said of Wilson: "His poems are full of beauty; they have all the freshness of the heather; a true relish for nature breaks

out in all of them; they are the earnest breathings of a happy and buoyant spirit—a giving out, as it were, of the breath that had been inhaled among the mountains." *

Or, as he himself has said:—

"This is a holy faith, and full of cheer
To all who worship nature, that the hours
Passed tranquilly with her fade not away
For ever, like the clouds; but in the soul
Possess a sacred, silent dwelling-place,
Where, with a smiling visage, memory sits,
And startles oft the virtuous with a show
Of unsuspected treasures."

I have now before me the collected edition of his poems, in two volumes, of 1825, when he was but thirty-seven, surely not all or the best which he might have done in that line, but at least all that he did. I fear these volumes are not much read in these days, but I venture to say that they are, especially the second, unduly forgotten. That latter volume contains numerous poems of very high excellence, fine music, deep and true and loving observation of nature, and noble feeling,—well worthy the

* Mrs S. C. Hall.

attention of people who care for the scenes and the lessons of the outward world, and who yearn to breathe for a time a purer atmosphere than that of shops and warehouses and writing-desks, political controversies, malignities, and meannesses, and much of our so-called instructive literature. Let any one who cares for pure nature, and for it as it is to be found in the country of the English Lakes, now read the 'Angler's Tent,' 'Lines Written at a Little Well by the Roadside,' 'Langdale,' 'Troutbeck Chapel,' and the Sonnets, and he will feel how pure and rare was the vision which, in the earliest years of this century, saw into the inner life of that lovely land,—then manifest only to the insight of Wordsworth and a very few of the other true seers of nearly eighty years ago.

Whoever has wandered up the Brathay, and then turned to the right up the hill, on the road to the Greater Langdale, will recognise the truth and felicity of these lines on Loughrig Tarn:—

"Beauteous as blest, O Naiad, thou must be!
For, since thy birth, have all delightful things,
Of form and hue, of silence and of sound,
Circled thy spirit, as the crowding stars

Shine round the placid moon. Lov'st thou to
sink
Into thy cell of sleep? The water parts
With dimpling smiles around thee, and below,
The unsunned verdure, soft as cygnet's down,
Meets thy descending feet without a sound.
Lov'st thou to sport upon the watery gleam?
Lucid as air around thy head it lies
Bathing thy sable locks in pearly light,
While, all around, the water-lilies strive
To shower their blossoms o'er the virgin queen.
Or doth the shore allure thee? Well it may:
How soft these fields of pastoral beauty melt
In the clear water! Neither sand nor stone
Bars herb or wild-flower from the dewy sound,
Like Spring's own voice now rippling round the
Tarn.
There oft thou liest 'mid the echoing bleat
Of lambs, that race amid the sunny gleams;
Or bee's wide murmur as it fills the broom
That yellows round thy bed. . . .
. . . . . .
. . . The wild vale that lies beyond,
Circled by mountains trod but by the feet
Of venturous shepherd, from all visitants,
Save the free tempests and the fowls of heaven,

Guards thee;—and wooded knolls fantastical
Seclude thy image from the gentler dale,
That by the Brathay's often-varied voice
Cheered as it winds along, in beauty fades
'Mid the green banks of joyful Windermere!"

He had personal reasons for loving this Tarn:—

"Oft hast thou borne into my grateful heart
Thy lovely presence, with a thousand dreams
Dancing and brightening o'er thy sunny wave,
Though many a dreary mile of mist and snow
Between us interposed."

Here are images which only the lonely wanderer on the hills could have caught and kept:—

"Fair are the vales that peaceful sleep
'Mid mountain-silence lone and deep,
Sweet narrow lines of fertile earth,
'Mid frowns of horror, smiles of mirth!
Fair, too, the fixed and floating cloud,
The light obscure by eve bestowed,
The sky's blue stillness, and the breast
Of lakes, with all that stillness blest." *

* *The Nameless Stream.*

In 'Lines written in a Highland Burial-ground,' there is a fine fusion of scenery, reflection, and pathos:—

" How mournfully this burial-ground
Sleeps 'mid old Ocean's solemn sound,
Who rolls his bright and sunny waves
All round these deaf and silent graves!
The cold wan light that glimmers here,
The sickly wild-flowers may not cheer;
If here, with solitary hum,
The wandering mountain-bee doth come,
'Mid the pale blossom short his stay,
To brighter leaves he booms away.
The sea-bird, with a wailing sound,
Alighteth softly on a mound,
And, like an image, sitting there
For hours amid the doleful air,
Seemeth to tell of some dim union,
Some wild and mystical communion,
Connecting with his parent sea
This lonesome, stoneless cemetery.

This may not be the burial-place
Of some extinguished kingly race,
Whose name on earth, no longer known,
Hath mouldered with the mouldering stone.

That nearest grave, yet brown with mould,
Seems but one summer-twilight old;
Both late and frequent hath the bier
Been on its mournful visit here;
And yon green spot of sunny rest
Is waiting for its destined guest.

I see no little kirk—no bell
On Sabbath tinkleth through this dell.
How beautiful those graves and fair,
That, lying round the house of prayer,
Sleep in the shadow of its grace!
But death hath chosen this rueful place
For his own undivided reign!
And nothing tells that e'er again
The sleepers will forsake their bed—
Now, and for everlasting dead,
For hope with memory seems fled!

Wild-screaming bird! unto the sea
Winging thy flight reluctantly,
Slow-floating o'er these grassy tombs
So ghost-like, with thy snow-white plumes,
At once from thy wild shriek I know
What means this place so steeped in woe!
Here, they who perished on the deep
Enjoy at last unrocking sleep;

For ocean, from his wrathful breast
Flung them into this haven of rest,
Where shroudless, coffinless, they lie,—
'Tis the shipwrecked seaman's cemetery."

We must add the following for its touching pathos :—

"Here seamen old, with grizzled locks,
Shipwrecked before on desert rocks,
And by some wandering vessel taken
From sorrows that seem God-forsaken,
Home-bound, here have met the blast
That wrecked them on death's shore at last!

. . . . . .

And here the bright-haired, fair-faced boy,
Who took with him all earthly joy
From one who weeps both night and day,
For her sweet son borne far away,
Escaped at last the cruel deep,
In all his beauty lies asleep;
While she would yield all hopes of grace
For one kiss of his pale cold face!"

The soul of the man is in these lines :—

"And fear not, Mary! that, when winter comes,
These solitary mountains will resign

The beauty that pervades their mighty frames,
Even like a living soul. The gleams of light
Hurrying in joyful tumult o'er the cliffs,
And giving to our musings many a burst
Of sudden grandeur, even as if the eye
Of God were wandering o'er the lovely wild,
Pleased with His own creation;—the still joy
Of cloudless skies; and the delighted voice
Of hymning fountains,—these will leave awhile
The altered earth:—But other attributes
Of Nature's heart will rule, and in the storm
We shall behold the same prevailing Power
That slumbers in the calm, and sanctify,
With adoration, the delight of love." *

Wilson had the unmistakable felicities of original poetic power. These are much more impressive, much more indicative of his genius, than his over-elaborated pictures. From 'A Lay of Fairy Land' we glean lines like these:—

"The child had gone at sunrise among the hills
to roam,
But many a sunset since had been, and none
had brought her home.

. . . . . .

* *My Cottage.*

Tales of the silent people, and their green
silent land.

. . . . . .

But who came then into the hall? One long
since mourned as dead!
Oh! never had the mould been strown on such
a star-like head!

. . . . . .

While they two were embracing, the Palace it
was gone,
And I and my dear sister stood by the great
Burial-stone;
While both of us our river saw in twilight
glimmering by,
And knew at once the dark Cairngorm in his
own silent sky."

Wilson, in his strength of soul, had an intense feeling for mountains and all their sterner features—storm, mystery, and solitude. This feeling pervades his resonant lines, 'Address to a Wild Deer,' and finds powerful expression in some of his sonnets.

In the 'Address to a Wild Deer' in the forest of Dalness, Glen Etive, Argyleshire, the scenery is so mingled with the spirit of the

creature portrayed, like a thing of ethereal, idealised life, that they cannot be severed in quotation :—

"Magnificent Creature! so stately and bright!
In the pride of thy spirit pursuing thy flight;
For what hath the child of the desert to dread,
Wafting up his own mountains that far-beaming head;
Or borne like a whirlwind down on the vale?—
Hail! King of the wild and the beautiful!—hail!
Hail! Idol divine!—whom Nature hath borne
O'er a hundred hill-tops since the mists of the morn,
Whom the pilgrim lone wandering on mountain and moor,
As the vision glides by him, may blameless adore;
For the joy of the happy, the strength of the free
Are spread in a garment of glory o'er thee.

Up! up to yon cliff! like a King to his throne!
O'er the black silent forest piled lofty and lone—

A throne which the eagle is glad to resign
Unto footsteps so fleet and so fearless as thine.
There the bright heather springs up in love of thy breast—
Lo! the clouds in the depth of the sky are at rest;
And the race of the wild winds is o'er on the hill!
In the hush of the mountains, ye antlers lie still—

Though your branches now toss in the storm of delight,
Like the arms of the pine on yon shelterless height.
One moment — thou bright Apparition! — delay!
Then melt o'er the crags, like the sun from the day.

. . . . . .

What lonely magnificence stretches around!
Each sight how sublime! and how awful each sound!
All hushed and serene, as a region of dreams,
The mountains repose 'mid the roar of the streams,

Their glens of black umbrage by cataracts riven,
But calm their blue tops in the beauty of heaven.
Here the glory of Nature hath nothing to fear—
Ay! Time the destroyer in power hath been here;
And the forest that hung on yon mountain so high,
Like a black thunder-cloud on the arch of the sky,
Hath gone, like that cloud, when the tempest came by.
Deep sunk in the black moor, all worn and decayed,
Where the floods have been raging, the limbs are displayed
Of the Pine-tree and Oak sleeping vast in the gloom,
The kings of the forest disturbed in their tomb.

E'en now, in the pomp of their prime, I behold
O'erhanging the desert the forests of old!
So gorgeous their verdure, so solemn their shade,
Like the heavens above them, they never may fade.

The sunlight is on them—in silence they sleep—
A glimmering glow, like the breast of the deep,
When the billows scarce heave in the calmness
of morn.
—Down the pass of Glen Etive the tempest is
borne,
And the hillside is swinging, and roars with a
sound
In the heart of the forest embosomed profound,
Till all in a moment the tumult is o'er,
And the mountain of thunder is still as the
shore
When the sea is at ebb; not a leaf nor a breath
To disturb the wild solitude, steadfast as death."

We may take the sonnet on 'Wastwater,' written during a storm:—

"There is a lake hid far among the hills,
That raves around the throne of solitude,
Not fed by gentle streams, or playful rills,
But headlong cataract and rushing flood.
There, gleam no lovely hues of hanging wood,
No spot of sunshine lights her sullen side;
For horror shaped the wild in wrathful mood,
And o'er the tempest heaved the mountain's
pride.

If thou art one, in dark presumption blind,
Who vainly deem'st no spirit like to thine,
That lofty genius deifies thy mind,
Fall prostrate here at Nature's stormy shrine,
And as the thunderous scene disturbs thy heart,
Lift thy changed eye, and own how low thou art."

Of the same type are the sonnets on 'Helm-Crag at Midnight,' 'The Voice of the Mountains,' 'Skiddaw during a Tempest.'

Let us take leave of this genial son of nature in his own words:—

"Yea! long as Nature's humblest child
Hath kept her Temple undefiled
By sinful sacrifice,
Earth's fairest scenes are all his own,
He is a monarch, and his throne
Is built amid the skies!" *

We cannot claim Byron (1788-1824) as a Scottish poet; but he was by blood half a Scotsman, and, what is more to the point, he lived at a susceptible age amid the heather and the mountains of Deeside. In 1796, when he

* *Lines written in a Highland Glen.*

was eight years old, Byron went with his mother to live at Ballater, where the mountains of Morven and Culbleen slope down to the haugh of the Dee, and away to the south-west, at the head of Glen Muick, rises "dark Lochnagar." Here he first learned to love outward nature, and that stern, wild, and powerful form of it which grew with his growth and moulded his poetic imagination. "From this period," he tells us, "I date my love of mountainous countries." Apparently the power of earth typified in the mountain found a sympathy in the strength and energy of his own character, and in the intensity of his emotion and imagination. The impressions of those early days abode with him through life, and the visions of Alp and Apennine were constantly mingled and tinged with memories of Morven, Culbleen, and Lochnagar:—

"England! thy beauties are tame and domestic
To one who has roamed o'er the mountains afar:
O, for the crags that are wild and majestic!
The steep frowning glories of dark Lochnagar."

Again :—

"He who first met the Highlands' swelling blue,
Will love each peak that shows a kindred hue,
Hail in each crag a friend's familiar face,
And clasp the mountain in the mind's embrace.
Long have I roamed through lands that are not
mine,
Adored the Alp and loved the Apennine,
Revered Parnassus, and beheld the steep
Jove's Ida and Olympus crown the deep:
But 'twas not all long ages' lore, nor all
Their nature, held me in their thrilling thrall;
The infant rapture still survived the boy,
And Lochnagar, with Ida, looked o'er Troy,
Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian
mount,
And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount."

No poetry in this century is characterised by a more intense feeling for the grand and the sublime in mountain scenery than that of Byron. He loved mountains for their strength, their endurance, their thrilling power, and through a secret community between them and his own inner heart.

"Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The Avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow.
All that expands the spirit, yet appalls,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How earth may pierce to heaven,
Yet leave vain man below."

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), a Scotsman by birth and education, was yet not distinctively a Scottish poet. He was, no doubt, greatly influenced in early youth by the scenery of the Western Highlands, where he resided for some time, and where he first conceived the idea of 'The Pleasures of Hope.' His power lay in the idealising of incident and character, and a certain transmutation of scenery so as to fit it as a fine setting for story or other poetic interest. His diction is that of the sensuous imagination, splendid, happy, gleaming in the sunlight; but his description is not, as a rule, distinguished by realism or truth to nature, by that trust in the scene which gives rise to

the purity and intensity of emotion concentred, which Wordsworth sends from heart to heart in one luminous flash. Nor has he left us much picturing of the scenes of his native land. Epithets, verses, we have of great and memorable impressiveness, and many quotable lines; but he did not care to dwell on realistic description for its own sake, rather used the real as the groundwork of imaginative soaring.

There is, in fact, in Campbell as in Wilson, though less in the former, that rhetorical taint caught from the style of last century which mars the true poetic flow, which gives a certain feeling of insincerity, as if the writer were working for effect, and not as the natural course of his emotion inspired him. We can pardon prose and tediousness, as in Wordsworth; it seems like a rest, the slow resting pool, ere the natural outburst and gleam come; but the constant strain after effect, dictated by no sincerity of conviction or feeling, palls on us and grows tiresome, even worse. The orator may be allowed to work up his points, and to strive to be effective, while we listen to him, for thus he has a kind of interest for us, though not of the highest; but the poet whom we read must

in the first place always be natural and true-souled to be accepted. He must stand as a spontaneous, inspired interpreter of that nature and that divine reality which transcends nature itself, a true transparent medium of the revelation which comes to every one who is fit to teach, and whose fitness rests on singleness of vision and purity of heart.

Yet Campbell has descriptive pieces of great merit. There is a fine mingling of pictorial power and pathos in the well-known 'Lines written in Argyleshire.' The opening stanzas give the scene in its touching completeness:—

"At the silence of twilight's contemplative hour,
I have mused in a sorrowful mood,
On the wind-shaken reeds that embosomed the bower
Where the home of my forefathers stood.
All ruined and wild is their roofless abode,
And lonely the dark raven's sheltering tree;
And travelled by few is the grass-covered road,
Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trod
To his hills that encircle the sea.

Yet wandering, I found on my ruinous walk,
By the dial-stone aged and green,
One rose of the wilderness left on its stalk,
To mark where a garden had been.
Like a brotherless hermit, the last of its race,
All wild in the silence of nature, it drew
From each wandering sunbeam a lonely embrace,
For the night-weed and thorn overshadowed the place
Where the flower of my forefathers grew."

Some stanzas on 'Cora Linn' are remarkable for their realistic touch, and make us regret that Campbell did not do more in the same mood. They were written on visiting the place in 1837:—

"The time I saw thee, Cora, last,
'Twas with congenial friends,
And calmer hours of pleasure past,
My memory seldom sends.

It was as sweet an autumn day
As ever shone on Clyde,
And Lanark's orchards all the way
Put forth their golden pride;

E'en hedges, busked in bravery,
Looked rich that sunny morn;
The scarlet hip and blackberry
So pranked September's thorn.

In Cora's glen the calm how deep!
That trees on loftiest hill
Like statues stood, or things asleep,
All motionless and still.

The torrent spoke, as if his noise
Bade Earth be quiet round,
And, give his loud and lonely voice
A more commanding sound.

His foam, beneath the yellow light
Of noon, came down, like one
Continuous sheet of jaspers bright—
Broad rolling by the sun.

Dear Linn! let loftier falling floods
Have prouder names than thine;
And, king of all, enthroned in woods,
Let Niagara shine.

Barbarian, let him shake his coasts
With reeking thunders far
Extended, like th' array of hosts
In broad embattled war!

His voice appals the wilderness;
Approaching thine, we feel
A solemn deep melodiousness,
That needs no louder peal.

More fury would but disenchant
Thy dream-inspiring din;
Be thou the Scottish Muse's haunt,
Romantic Cora Linn."

There was a fine heart in a man who could write these lines:—

"Star that bringest home the bee,
And sett'st the weary labourer free!
If any star shed peace, 'tis thou
That send'st it from above,
Appearing when heaven's breath and brow
Are sweet as hers we love.

Come to the luxuriant skies,
Whilst the landscape's odours rise;
Whilst, far off, lowing herds are heard,
And songs, when toil is done,
From cottages whose smoke unstirred
Curls yellow in the sun." *

* Campbell, *To the Evening Star.*

We ought to thank Campbell for these true stanzas:—

"O deem not, 'midst this worldly strife,
An idle art the poet brings;
Let high philosophy control,
And sages calm the stream of life,—
'Tis he refines its fountain-springs,
The nobler passions of the soul.

It is the muse that consecrates
The native banner of the brave,
Unfurling, at the trumpet's breath,
Rose, thistle, harp; 'tis she elates
To sweep the field, or ride the wave,
A sunburst in the storm of death." *

* Campbell; *Memory of Burns.*

CHAPTER XXII.

MODERN PERIOD: JOHN CAMPBELL SHAIRP.

(1819–1885.)

JOHN CAMPBELL SHAIRP (1819-1885) was born at Houstoun House, Linlithgowshire. He was educated at the Edinburgh Academy, the University of Glasgow, and Balliol College, Oxford. After graduating at Oxford, he became an Assistant Master at Rugby. In 1857 he accepted the position of Assistant to the Professor of Humanity in St Andrews, succeeded to the Professorship in 1863, and was appointed Principal of the United College in 1868. He died in September 1885, in his sixty-seventh year.

'Kilmahoe, and other Poems,' was published in 1864. This volume, however, represents but a small portion of his poetical work; and one is

delighted to find that there is now a prospect of the collection of his scattered poems from periodicals, and of the addition to these of hitherto unpublished pieces. Shairp was a poet not only in verse but in his prose. His 'Aspects of Poetry,' and his other contributions to poetical criticism, are themselves full of fine poetry, and of the highest critical value.

It is not my purpose here to depict John Campbell Shairp as he was, and as I knew him. I have but to do at present with his position as a poet of nature. But so entirely was the man fused with the poet, so completely was all he wrote a part and faithful expression of himself, that I cannot disconnect what holds of the poet from what is applicable to the man, what, in fact, had its source in his life and character.

Shairp was by circumstances and profession a classical scholar and teacher; but his main bent did not lie there, though his renderings into that pure and beautiful English of which he was a master were the delight of his students, and still linger in their memories. Shairp seems to me to have got from the classics what was best in their human moods, in their essentials of literary and artistic form and feeling. This

was their fruition in him, and the best harvest that can be reaped from them. Then he had a deep and continuous interest in the moral problems of life and the world, though he never could have risen to the very highest place in speculation. Yet I have not known any one who lived more constantly, more completely, every day, in an atmosphere of reverence for what was pure and good, and for the verities of the Unseen. As a friend, he was one of the rarest and truest; and, what is by no means common in the strife of our time, he was wholly magnanimous, ready to recognise and forward to proclaim merit in the literary work of others, rivals in his own sphere of effort. Tinge of any spark of jealousy Shairp never knew. He had in him great moral strength of character,—with all his tenderness a strong fibre of "the carle stalk of hemp," which often stood him in good stead. And I may add that I have not known any one with a more complete, quiet, manly, and unruffled indifference to journalistic attacks, evidently inspired by personal or political hostility, and deliberately blind, or painfully purblind, to his literary and poetical merits.

Then he was a man in whom there was an

almost complete continuity between what you knew him to be and what he uttered in his writings. These were but the apt, the natural expression of his life. His prose and poetry alike were the simple outcome of the man, what harmonised entirely with his daily feelings, conversation, and actions. Genuine to the core, no man had ever less of a dual character about him; and all was of moral and imaginative fibre intertwined,—the glow and the gleam of the poet's fire in the rapid spiritual intuition.

Finely, keenly impressible, Shairp was eminently a poet of outward nature. This was the main, almost habitual, source of his inspiration, of those impulses to emotion, those gleaming images, and quick glowing insights into the heart of things, and that purity, grace, felicity of diction, which abound in his poetry. And the nature he knew and loved best, and drew from, was that of his own land. Scottish scenery was his heart love, from the blue Cheviots and the wavy hills of the Border across the Lowland country, and by the shores of Western Argyle, to the wilds of Rannoch and the heights and corries of the grand Cairngorms.

All this he knew, had walked it, sought out on foot mountain-burn, glen, crevice, and corrie, the soul of solitary places. Born on the southern side of the Firth of Forth, at Houstoun House, not far from historical Linlithgow, he was familiar with country sights and sounds, and a free open-air life, from his boyhood, especially with the field-sports of which his home was the centre, and his father the master. He showed even as a boy that he had inherited from his father and people before him the delight in riding to the hounds. There thus grew up a love for the moorland and the breeze —"the meditative moors"—until at length this feeling deepened into that pure poetic insight and imaginative emotion which so markedly permeate his poetry.

Houstoun House was indeed well fitted for the birthplace and home of a poet,—instinct with Scottish nationality and the love of Scottish story and scenery. It stands now quaint and picturesque, almost quite as it did in Mary's time—some parts of it dating even from beyond that period. Its formal gardens and parterres, divided by clipt yew and box hedges, suggest old life and stately manners. The

whole forms a most interesting link with the past of Scottish story, and carries the thought back readily to that Queen-Advocate Shairp of Mary's day, who apparently was the first of the name to settle here. Such an influence was not lost on the poet of the line. This is how he pictures his home:—

"An old white lofty-gabled Lowland home:
Up to the sunshine, and the breezes all,
For ages o'er the ancestral trees have clomb
Its stalwart chimneys tall.

Far seen, for open on the south it gleams
To clear noons, like a white unfurlèd flag;
In rainy weather, dimmed with stains and seams,
Like a grey-lichened crag.

Far seen, wide-gazing, the old mansion grey,
Adown the long lime avenue, from its doors,
Looks, here to rich tilled lands, yonder, away
To meditative moors.

Hard by, hedge-sheltered garden, hiding woods,
And morning fields, for childhood's summer play,
Nor less responsive to more sober moods,
And life's autumnal day.

In that old home lived Moira, tender wife
And mother, by meek faith and ceaseless prayer,
For them she loved through all the strain of life
Made strong to do and bear." *

In the vacation days, during his college career at Glasgow and Oxford, he visited relatives in Argyleshire, and thus became familiar with the Western Highlands, its bays, its lochs, its rock-fronted shores dashed by the Atlantic waves. He also spent portions of his time in rambles through Rannoch and Glencoe and the northern mountains. But I have heard him speak most constantly and with most fervour of the days and nights he used to spend in the Border country, the vales of the Liddel and the Hermitage Water, Teviot, Ettrick, Yarrow, and Tweed, especially in its upper reaches, the wilds of Tweedsmuir, Gameshope, and Talla. He must have been walking through these when I was a boy at school, and when I occasionally spurted out on a Saturday or during the August holidays—the now old, past, dream-like days, sun-gilded, often mist-stricken—of forty years ago. We never once met in those days. But

* *Kilmahoe*, p. 112.

I can now think of how he would have looked in Glenrath or Talla. All this Border and Lowland country he knew in every varied aspect. He set out of a morning often without definite purpose or knowledge of where he was in the evening to eat or sleep. His walk or wandering would last delightfully, simply as long as there was daylight, and often far on beyond that, while there was but the grey gloaming or the glint of the moon. He would house at night where a hospitable farmer would take him in, or where a queerly puzzled old shepherd and his wife could spare a bed in the *ben* of the cottage. Thus he went over, knew, felt, took to his heart all the Border and Lowland glens and burns and hills, the lives, too, of the humble but often noble dwellers there, in a way which no other man in that time did,—in a way, too, which few understood or knew aught about.

One element of the fascination which the Borderland had for him, apart from its natural charms, was his openness to impressions from the places and names, the keen quickenings of feeling and imagination from spots of ancient Scottish story, of Border skirmish and foray, of ruined peels, of hillsides and glens associated

with "old unhappy times, and battles long ago." These with Shairp were interwoven into the aspect of the scene as with a real presence. Walking with him, and speaking of old story connected with a place, I have seen him pause, moved and struggling with emotion, unbare his head, as if the very scene were before him. This extraordinary susceptibility and reverence for the past was that in his nature which so linked him to Scott, and made him regard the author of the 'Lay' and 'Marmion,' of the 'Antiquary' and the 'Heart of Mid-Lothian,' as the truest poet of Scottish landscape, the truest interpreter of Scottish story, even the greatest creator in the realm of imagination since the era of Shakespeare. All that Scott loved, Shairp loved; but at the same time he had a sympathy and tenderness for some sides of Scottish life which Scott had not. His feeling for the martyred Hillmen was deep and true, and he understood their motives and inspirations greatly better than Scott did. "True men and women, with their souls athirst for God — the living God." Witness the lines on 'Renwick' — as he stood by the grey thorn in the green lonely nook of the Chapelhope Burn, ministered to the

hunted remnant, performed for the last time the rite of baptism, and then passed away from the sight of the worshippers—

"Youngest and last of Scotland's martyr sons." *

Possibly he had been drawn originally to the Borderland, especially the Yarrow, by the legend, well founded, of his house, that his ancestress was that Mary Scott of Dryhope,—now a mouldering peel by the burn which chimes down to the Yarrow as it leaves the Loch of St Mary's,—known in her day as "the Flower of Yarrow." She, the gentle and the fair, the daughter of a rough reiver, had wedded the still rougher reiver, Scott of Harden. And from one of her sons sprang a Scott, who became the wife of Shairp of Houstoun.

"Rough Wat" he was called, who married the Flower of Yarrow; and she, it is said, once saved a child that had been carried to the Den of Harden amid the spoils from the south of the Cheviots, and he lived to make Border songs:—

"Saved other names, but left his own unsung."

The fine fibre of gentleness in the heart of

* See *Kilmahoe, and Other Poems*, p. 162 (1864).

the Flower of Yarrow had come down to her descendant, — himself a sweet singer of the stream.

Among the poems on the Borders, 'The Last of the Forest' and 'The Moors' illustrate the feeling for nature. 'Thrieve Castle,' 'Then and Now,' 'O Willie East,' show the power of old story, ballad, and legend. 'The Bush aboon Traquair' is the well-known masterpiece of pathos echoing from the olden time.

THE LAST OF THE FOREST.

"Ash-trees, gnarled, bent, and hoary!
Whence have they this marvellous power?
Is the whole forest's perished glory
Resting on them for a dower?

Foray rides and battle riot,
That adown this vale have driven,
Blend they here with summer quiet
Of these green hills calm as heaven?

. . . . . .

Painter! come thou here and gather
Wealth of summer's goldenest days;
Catch each tint the changing weather
Traileth o'er these idle braes.

And wouldst thou their secret render,
Watch these few last lorn ash-trees,
In this hour of braeside splendour,
With the bracken round their knees:

Stems grey-lichened, green leaves gleaming,
And yon smooth majestic slope,
With one stray cloud-shadow dreaming
Upward to its skyey cope.

. . . . . .

Trancèd there, in sunshine glinting
Will these trees reveal to thee
All the meanings they are hinting,
Past, and present, and to be?"

This is how he touches the simple wayside flower, familiar even by Lowland roadsides:—

"Again the bonnie blue bells
Wave all o'er our dear land,
Or scattered single, here and there,
Or a numerous sister band.

How many a last leave-taking
Hath darkened over youthful faces
Since the hour ye last were here!

Now in all your wonted places,
From long wintry sleep awaking,
Blithe ye reappear.

The same ye meet us, be we joyful,
Or bowed down by heavy loads,
On the thatch of auld clay-biggins,
Shedding grace o'er poor abodes,
Or from dykes of greensward gleaming,
Hard by unfrequented roads.

O'er the linns of dark Clyde water,
Ye are trembling, from the steep,
And afar on dusky moorlands,
Where the shepherd wears his sheep,
By the hoary headstone waving
O'er the Covenanter's sleep.

. . . . . .

In your old haunts, O happy blue bells!
Ye, when we are gone, shall wave,
And as living we have loved you,
Dead, one service would we crave,
Come, and in the west winds swinging,
Prank the sward that folds our grave." *

His family connection with the Campbells of Kildaloig, the original of Kilmahoe, and his

* *Kilmahoe*, pp. 189, 190.

friendship with the family of Ormsary, brought him into early familiarity with the scenery of the western shore of Argyle. This is depicted especially in 'Kilmahoe,' the "old Laird" being his own ancestor; and many of the incidents have a family and personal reference. 'Kilmahoe' is a poem dedicated to the simplicities, the purities, the sanctities of domestic life; but it is full to overflow of the feeling for nature. The opening lines show a fine eye and a deft hand.

"Upon a ledge of hillside lea,
'Mid native woods, the white house peeps
Down one green field upon the sea,
And o'er the sea to Arran steeps.
In front far out broad reaches smile
Of blue sea, flanked on either hand,
Here by a porphyry-coloured isle,
There by a forward brow of land.
No day nor season but doth wear
Some grandeur or some beauty there;
Spring with its song-birds all alive
Through the copses and mountain leas,
While Ailsa every morn doth hive
With gull or gannet, to swim or dive
That sheen of sunny seas."

The references to the sterner and grander side of nature are not so numerous in his poems as those to the more soft and gentle. Yet the feeling is there, and frequently developed. Mountain height and solitude, the driven and tearing rack of heaven, the far-stretching expanse of hill and moorland under the grey of sun-streaked cloud, were his soul's delight and inspiration. The scenery of the Ossianic poems thrilled him, as the meditative spirit of Wordsworth charmed and nourished him. Few men knew the Highlands of Scotland better than Shairp, and since the time of John Wilson no one has walked through them with a more intensely loving and poetic heart.

'Kilmahoe' alone is full of the deepest Highland feeling. The description of the house of the "old Laird," the wonderful picture of "the Island," 'The Moor of Rannoch,' 'The Forest of Sli'-Gaoil,' 'Return to Nature,' 'Caillech Bein-y-Vreich,' 'A Dream of Glen Sallach,' all show the purity, depth, intensity of the feeling for Highland scenery; and show, too, how greatly he felt, not only the soft and gentle, but the strong, stern, mist-covered, storm-tossed side.

The following picture of "the Island" in 'Kil-

mahoe' is not surpassed in the language for real presence, felicity of epithet, and purity of reproduction. I may mention that the island is Davaar, lying off the coast opposite Campbeltown.

"On a breezy day
The island seen from hill-tops far away
Stands out encinctured white with zone of foam,
Like a fair maiden. View it nearer home,
Wave springs on wave against the adamant wall,
Leaping like lions, then to plash and fall
Down-driven, baffled, and to seethe and moan
Among the splintered blocks and boulders strown
Along the basement. Many a shuddering cry
Of seamen in their shipwrecked agony
Hath smote these cruel crags, in the blank dark
Of winter nights, when some poor helpless bark,
After long battle till the day grew blind,
Groping through night the harbour mouth to find,
Won for a haven but the iron-bound
Back of the island and the gulfs profound.
The top was grassy, but no shepherd housed
Nor fed flock there, only the wild goats browsed

O'er it, or lightly leapt from ledge to ledge,
Watching the sea surge o'er the dizzy edge.
All day that edge, gull-haunted and clanged-
o'er,
Was loud with multitudinous uproar
Of gannet, kittiwake, and tern that wound,
A wheeling cloud, slow-eddying round and
round,
With ocean minstrelsy that never fails,
But there from dawn to sunset wildly wails,
Shrill shrieks above, and countless wings of
snow,
White-flashing breakers thundering far below."*

What can be finer than this 'Dream of Glen Sallach'?—

"That summer glen is far away,
Who loved me then, their graves are green,
But still that dell and distant day
Lie bright in memory's softest sheen.

Are these still there, outspread in space,
The grey mossed-trees, the mountain stream?
Or in some ante-natal place,
That only cometh back in dream?

* *Kilmahoe*, p. 24.

There first upon my soul was cast
  Dim reverence, blent with glorious thrills,
From out an old heroic past,
  Lapped in the older calm of hills.

Still after thirty summers loom
  On dreaming hours the lichened trees,
The ivied walls, the warrior's tomb,
  'Mid those old mountain sanctities.

. . . . . .

In deep of noon, mysterious dread
  Fell on me in that glimmering glen,
Till, as from haunted ground, I fled
  Back to the kindly homes of men.

Thanks to that glen! its scenery blends
  With childhood's most ideal hour,
When Highland hills I made my friends,
  First owned their beauty, felt their power.

Still, doubtless, o'er Kilbrannan Sound,
  As lovely lights from Arran gleam,
'Mid hills that gird Glen Sallach round,
  As happy children dream their dream.

The western sea, as deep of tone,
  Is murmuring 'gainst that caverned shore

But, one whole generation gone,
. No more those haunts are ours, no more."

And it was not simply the mere attractiveness of the scenery which touched him. His heart went out to the people whom he met in the way, to cottar, crofter, and fisherman, in lone Highland glen, by loch and wild sea-shore. Long ere land leagues or land schemes were thought of as we now know them, Shairp was an advocate of the increase of small but adequate farms in the Highlands; he bewailed the hardship of forced emigration, denounced clearances for deer, sympathised with the home feeling of the Celt, and had touched in genuine verse the pathos of desolation which attaches to the sight of the roofless cottage, ruined steading, and deserted graveyard in far-away Highland solitudes. The power of most of his Highland poems lies in the mingling of sympathy for the exile from his native glen, the passing away of the simple life and its habits, with a feeling for the nature around the broken and roofless homestead, touched now only with the softening hand of decay:—

GOAT-MILKING.

"When I was a lassie, I raise and was ready,
In the grey of the dawn o'er Loch Lubnaig to hold,
And up the dark flanks of morn-smitten Benledi,
Would call my loved milking-goats down to the fold.

From high airy peak, and from dark-shadowed corrie,
The ledge of the crag, and the cleft of the rock,
Weel kenned they my cry, and descending would hurry,
The grey-bearded sires and the dams of the flock.

To soothe them at milking-time, wild strains of Oran
And Ossian I chanted, or some bonnie sang
Of Bard Duncan Bàn, and his dauted Bendoran,
Till the crags far and near wi' the melody rang.

But the milking's a' dune, high and low, through the Hielans,
The hills of the wild goats now ken them no more;

Hands that milked them are cauld, and the bonny blithe shealings
Are bourocks o' stanes, wi' rank nettles grown o'er.

The auld life is gone, root and branch; Saxon strangers
Hold a' the hill hirsels we ance ca'd our ain,
And the dun herds of deer, and the few forest-rangers
On the Gael's noblest mountains are all that remain.

Brave hearts now are naught, gold is chieftain and master,
What room in the land for puir bodies like me!
It's time I were safe beyond dool and disaster,
Wi' the lave o' my clan 'neath the auld rowan-tree."

The other characteristics of the poetry of Shairp, besides the intense love for nature, are a fine moral and spiritual feeling, a certain purity of reflection, a consciousness of the symbolism of the outward world as a counterpart of

mind, and the deep sense of a Divine Presence as pervading, and so far illumining, the order of things, our familiarity with which tends at once to blind us to its lessons and to make us forget its mystery. On this side, the influence of Wordsworth is manifest, for long, and perhaps even to the end, the strongest power over Shairp's life. He was among the earliest in this century to feel and to understand fully the power and the place of Wordsworth in British poetry, life, and thought. Long before the tide of appreciation of Wordsworth, which had been silently and slowly growing, rose to its full volume about 1840, Shairp had felt the force of the new seer, recognised his foremost place and function, had been moulded by him, and proclaimed the truth to the select circle of his friends.

Principal Shairp paid a visit to Ormsary in the autumn of 1885. There he was seized with his last illness, and passed away in the morning of the 18th September, in the place of his early youthful haunts and impressions, among the dearest of all to his heart. Shortly afterwards, on that beautiful September day, when his friends went forth from his forefathers'

old, quaint, and stately home, following his bier, to the venerable church of Uphall, one thought of that side of nature, the apparently unsympathetic, that which seems to be indifferent to our joys and sorrows, to which he himself used frequently to refer, and which he has so well expressed in the words on Keble:—

"Man holds his festal days, and nature frowns; he goes forth from the death-chamber, and nature affronts him with sunshine and the song of birds." Amid these perplexities and seeming contradictions,—amid "the suffering and death going on through animated creation,"—Shairp felt that there was some help for man in the faith which holds by an issue "through a redemptive sorrow which is Divine."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MODERN PERIOD: DAVID GRAY AND OTHERS.

(1838-1861.)

We have seen how in Thomson and in Grahame the barrier to an appreciation of winter scenery was greatly broken down. This appreciation did not, however, reach its fulness until the present century. We find the feeling joyous and exultant in at least three men — David Gray, D. M. Moir, and Evan MacColl.

David Gray (1838-1861) was born at Merkland, near Kirkintilloch, and died there at the age of twenty-three. He had in him deep and delicate sensibility to the outward world; and he has voiced its varied impressions with truth, tenderness, and power. He was open to—

"The subtle lore that nature brings
Unto the reverential mind,
The pathos worn by common things,
By every flower that lights the lea,
And by the pale anemone."

We have seen what was the impression of a Scottish winter, in the middle of the fifteenth century, on the mind of a poet of undoubted susceptibility and fine impulses—Gawin Douglas; and generally the kind of feeling for the scenes of winter in Scottish poetry during all the Stuart period. We may compare this with the description of a winter scene of David Gray, who died in our own day at the age of twenty-three—too early, alas! for the realisation of his hopes and the promise of his genius. The contrast between the two states of mind, represented by the older and the later poet, is most marked; and nothing could more thoroughly indicate the growth of æsthetical feeling in our literature—its widening, deepening, and reconcilement to nature—than a comparison of the two passages of Douglas and Gray.* The quotation is from 'The Luggie':—

* For the description by Douglas see above, vol. i. p. 275 *et seq.*

"A winter day! the feather silent snow
Thickens the air with strange delight, and lays
A fairy carpet on the barren lea.
No sun, yet, all around, that inward light
Which is in purity—a soft moonshine,
The silvery dimness of a happy dream.
How beautiful! afar on moorland ways,
Bosomed by mountains, darkened by huge glens
(Where the lone altar raised by Druid hands
Stands like a mournful phantom), hidden clouds
Let fall soft beauty, till each green fir branch
Is plumed and tassel'd, till each heather stalk
Is delicately fringed. The sycamores
Thro' all their mystical entanglement
Of boughs are draped with silver. . .

. . . . . .

The harmony of nature, the divine
Diffusive spirit of the Beautiful.
Out in the snowy dimness, half revealed
Like ghosts in glimpsing moonshine, wildly run
The children in bewildering delight.
There is a living glory in the air—
A glory in the hushed air, in the soul
A palpitating wonder hushed in awe.

. . . . . .

. . . Slow fall, slow fall,
With indecisive motion eddying down,
The white-winged flakes, calm as the sleep of sound,
Dim as a dream. . . .

. . . . . .

Oh! the inner beauty and the life,
The life that is in snow! The virgin-soft
And utter purity of the down flake
Falling upon its fellow with no sound!
Unblown by vulgar winds, innumerous flakes
Fall gently with the gentleness of love!"

Gray has further left us two poems dedicated to the same theme, "Snow."* The one is as follows:—

"Flowers upon the summer lea,
Daisies, kingcups, pale primroses—
These are sung from sea to sea,
As many a darling rhyme discloses.
Tangled wood and hawthorn dale,
In many a songful snatch prevail,
But never yet, as well I mind,
In all their verses can I find

* See *The Poetical Works of David Gray*, pp. 170, 198. 1874.

A simple tune, with quiet flow,
To match the falling of the snow.

O, weary passed each winter day,
And windily howled each winter night;
O, miry grew each village way,
And mists enfolded every height;
And ever o'er the winter pane
A froward gust flew down with rain,
And day by day, in tawny brown,
The Luggie stream came heaving down;
I could have fallen asleep and dreamed
Until again spring sunshine gleamed.

And what, said I, is this the mode
That winter kings it nowadays?
The robin keeps its own abode,
And pipes his independent lays.
I've seen the day on Merkland hill
That snow has fallen with a will,
Even in November! Now, alas!
The whole year round we see the grass:
O, winter now may come and go
Without a single fall of snow.

It was the latest day but one
Of winter, as I questioned thus;

And sooth! an angry mood was on,
As at a thing most scandalous;
When lo! some hailstones on the pane
With sudden tinkle rang amain,
Till, in an ecstasy of joy,
I clapped and shouted like a boy.
O, rain may come and rain may go,
But what can match the falling snow!

It draped the naked sycamore
On Foordcrofthill, above the mill;
The elms of Rosebank o'er and o'er
Were silvered richly as it fell.
The distant Campsie peaks were lost,
And farthest Criftin with his host
Of gloomy pine-trees disappeared,
Not even a lonely ridge upreared.
O, rain may come and rain may go,
But what can match the falling snow!

Afar upon the Solsgirth moor
Each heather sprig of withered brown
Is fringed with thread of silver pure,
As slow the soft flakes waver down;
And on Glenconner's lonely path,
And Gartshore's still and open strath

It falleth, quiet as the birth
Of morning o'er the quickening earth.
O, rain may come and rain may go,
But what can match the falling snow!

And all around our Merkland home
Is laid a sheet of virgin lawn;
On fairer, softer, ne'er did roam
The nimble Oread or Faun.
There is a wonder in the air,
A living beauty everywhere;
As if the whole had ne'er been planned,
But touched by Merlin's famous wand,
Suddenly woke beneath his hand
To potent bliss in fairy show—
A mighty ravishment of snow."

Before David Gray, the same pure feeling for winter and its snow had touched the heart of "Delta," David Macbeth Moir (1798-1851), in contrast to the attitude of the older poets, and itself a development of what we find in Thomson and Grahame. And he has expressed it in 'The Winter Wild' with much power:—

"How sudden hath the snow come down!
Last night the new moon showed her horn,

And o'er December's moorland brown
Rain on the breeze's wing was borne;
But, when I ope my shutters, lo!
Old earth hath changed her garb again,
And, with its fleecy, whitening snow,
O'ermantles hill and cumbers plain.

Bright snow, pure snow, I love thee well,
Thou art a friend of ancient days;
Whene'er mine eyes upon thee dwell,
Long buried thoughts 'tis thine to raise;—
Far to remotest infancy,
My pensive mind thou hurriest back,
When first, pure blossoms of the sky,
I watched to earth your mazy track,

And upward looked with wondering eyes,
To see the heavens with motion teem,
And butterflies a thousand ways
Down flaking in an endless stream.

. . . . . .

And when the silver moon shone forth
O'er lands and lakes in white arrayed,
And dancing in the stormy North,
The red electric streamers played;

'Twas ecstasy, 'neath twinkling trees,
All low-born thoughts and cares exiled,
To listen to the Polar Breeze,
And look upon the 'Winter Wild!'"

In Evan MacColl (born in 1808, and now settled in Canada), a bard nourished amid the Highland traditions and scenery of Argyle, we have the same purity and intensity of feeling for the snowy landscape as in the Lowlander, David Gray. Thus MacColl addresses 'The Falling Snow':—

"Bright-robed pilgrim from the North!
Visitant of heavenly birth,
Welcome on thy journey forth,—
Come, come, snow!

Light as fairy footsteps free,
Fall—oh, fall! I love to see
Earth thus beautified by thee,—
Come, come, snow!

Silent as the flow of thought,
Gentle as a sigh love-fraught,
Welcome as a boon long sought,—
Come, come, snow!

Let him boast of landscapes green
Who no Highland vale hath seen,
Decked in thy resplendent sheen,—
Come, come, snow!

Streamlets that to yonder tide
Gleam like silver as they glide,
Look like darkness thee beside,—
Come, come, snow!

. . . . . .

Lo! beneath thy gentle tread,
Fair as bride to altar led,
Bends the lady-birch her head,—
Come, come, snow!

. . . . . .

Evening stealeth on apace;
Soon in all her virgin grace
Earth shall sleep in thy embrace,-
Come, come, snow!

But enough,—I fain would see
How the stars shall smilingly
Gaze upon the earth and thee:
Cease—cease, snow!"

In the period which we may call the most modern, and which is now going on, we have careful and loving picturing of certain aspects of our natural scenery. A good deal of it is direct, spontaneous, and sympathetically brooding, a pure feeling for the scene and its natural suggestions. But, as a rule, the turn our Scottish poetry of nature has taken is rather that of fusing, and so far intensifying, the scenery with various kinds of emotion. We have, of course, the love feeling in abundance, too much even, getting somewhat traditional and hackneyed by association with stereotyped objects of the natural world. But there is a wider range of emotion at the command of our poets, and of their truly inspiring theme. We find fused with natural scenery the love of home, kindred, and locality, patriotism, the feeling of exile, of retrospect in middle life and in old age, local and national associations, pathos, grief, hope, and despair. The scene which the poet selects, or which his imagination constructs out of the real, is not regarded as of interest merely for its own sake; its charm is intensified by the suffusing emotion under which it is seen or contemplated. Man and nature are for the time

fused in one great unity of heart and feeling; the objective stands out in the light of the subjective emotion, and the otherwise invisible element of feeling becomes incarnate and vivid in the forms, colours, and sounds of outward nature. The emotion lives in the outward world, and this in turn is etherealised by the emotion.

At the head of this class of poets, so far at least as the feeling of love is concerned, stands Robert Tannahill (1774-1810). He has fused Scottish scenery and pure passionate love in his lyrics in a way so truthful and tender as is not surpassed, if equalled, by any Scottish songster of this century. In his heart was an intense love for the spring and summer days, for "the snow-white clouds" of the April morn, for "the downie buds" and "the feathery brackens," for the notes of merle and mavis. And his eye was as accurate in noting, and his hand as deft in picturing, as his nature love was intense.

His lyrics are well known, though we do not hear them sung so often in our drawing-rooms as we ought to do. But 'The Braes o' Gleniffer,' 'Gloomy Winter's now Awa',' and 'The Braes o' Balquhither' are already sealed for immortality.

"Let us go, lassie, go,
To the braes o' Balquhither,
Where the blaeberries grow
'Mang the bonnie Highland heather;
Where the deer and the roe,
Lightly bounding together,
Sport the lang summer day
On the braes o' Balquhither.

I will twine thee a bower
By the clear siller fountain,
And I'll cover it o'er
Wi' the flowers of the mountain;
I will range through the wilds
And the deep glens sae drearie,
And return wi' the spoils
To the bower o' my dearie.

When the rude wintry win'
Idly raves round our dwelling,
And the roar of the linn
On the night breeze is swelling,
So merrily we'll sing
As the storm rattles o'er us,
Till the dear shieling ring
Wi' the light lilting chorus.

Now the summer's in prime,
  Wi' the flowers richly blooming,
And the wild mountain thyme
  A' the moorlands perfuming;
To our dear native scenes
  Let us journey together,
Where glad innocence reigns
  'Mang the braes o' Balquhither."

We have further distinctive illustrations of this fusion of nature and human feeling in such poems as 'Jeanie Morrison,' 'Wearie's Well,' 'The Dying Poet,' of William Motherwell (1797-1835); 'It's Hame, and it's Hame,' 'The Sun rises bright in France,' of Allan Cunningham (1784-1842); 'Lucy's Flittin'' of William Laidlaw (1780-1845); the 'Farewell to Teviotdale' of Thomas Pringle (1789-1834); 'The Rowan Tree,' and other lyrics, of Lady Nairne (1766-1845); 'The Skylark Loud and Free,' and other simple and genuine utterances of Janet Hamilton (1795-1873); 'The Rover of Lochryan' of Hew Ainslie (1792-1880); 'The Springtime' of Alexander Smart (1798-1866); 'The Exile's Song,' 'The Bonnie Braes of Scotland,' 'In the Days o' Langsyne,' of Robert Gil-

fillan (1798-1850); 'The Sacramental Sabbath,' 'The Cameronian's Dream,' of James Hyslop (1798-1827).

In the same line we have pieces by David Vedder (1790-1854); John Nevay (1792-1870); Henry Scott Riddell (1798-1870); Robert Pollok (1798-1827); John Imlah (1799-1846), especially 'Auld Scotia's Sangs'; Thomas Aird (1802-1876), 'The River'; Andrew Park (1807-1863), 'Hurrah for the Highlands'; Thomas Smibert (1810-1854), 'The Widow's Lament,' 'My ain dear Land'; Thomas Tod Stoddart (1810-1880), 'Loch Skene,' 'Musings on the Banks of the Teviot'; William Miller (1810-1872), 'Spring,' 'Summer,' 'Hairst,' 'November,' 'The Bluebell,' 'The Haw-blossom'; John Bethune (1810-1839); Jane Cross Simpson (1811-1885); Robert Nicoll (1814-1837), 'The Place that I lo'e best,' 'Death'; Hugh Macdonald (1817-1860); Alexander Smith (1830-1867); William Leighton (1841-1869). This list might be largely increased; and reference need only be made to the collections of Murdoch, Grant Wilson, and Edwards, to show how widely,

during this last half-century, the feeling for nature has spread in Scotland.

Hugh Macdonald an intense nature lover, is best known by his prose work, 'Rambles round Glasgow.' In it there appears the heart of the true poet. He has left some very graceful pieces in verse,—such as 'The Bonnie Wee Well' and 'The Wee Primrose.' The latter may be given:—

"On a green mossie bank, 'neath a bonnie birk-tree,
By a burnie that danced to its ain voice o glee,
A sweet yellow primrose on March op'd her een,
Like wee starries o' gowd in a bricht cleid o' green.

O sweet sang the merle in the hour o' her birth,
An' the lark tauld his joy frae the lift to the earth;
While the wud-mouse peep'd out frae a grey lichen'd stone
To welcome the floo'r that bids winter begone.

Though March whussilt keen through the cauld
drapeless wud,
The bonnie birk-tree 'gan to smile an' to bud;
Sayin', 'Summer is near, since the primrose is
come;
I'll don my green kirtle, an' welcome her home.'

The wee robin cam' there wi' his sere-breasted
bride,
An' they biggit their nest at the primrose's side;
An' sweet frae the birk-tree he sang air an' late,
To soothe the bit heart o' his bonnie wee mate."

Janet Hamilton, the poetess of Langloan, had an exceptional passion for nature in certain of its aspects. Born in humble circumstances, and wholly self-taught, she has left a volume of verse and prose,* much of which is of striking interest. Her acquaintance with the outward world was limited—having lived all her days in the lower reach of the Clyde valley, near Coatbridge. And she was blind for the last eighteen years of her life. All through her life-time, she was never more than twenty miles from her dwelling. She was not familiar with moun-

* *Poems, Essays, and Sketches.* By Janet Hamilton. Glasgow: Maclehose, 1880.

tains, except possibly the shadowy form of some distant hill or hill-range. She never saw the sea, nor any river but the Clyde. The glen of the Calder Water, a tributary of the Clyde, and the Luggie, a small but picturesque stream whose banks and nooks showed the primrose, the hyacinth, and the bluebell, in spring and summer, and were golden with bracken in autumn, were all that was open to her, but they were frequently haunted and intensely loved.

With the true poetic instinct that yearns for the wild and the free, she preferred the flowers of the glen and the moorland, "the wildings of nature," and the heather bloom, to the finest nurslings of horticultural art. She loved the former, as she says, and admired the latter. Sweetly she sings of 'Wild Flowers':—

"The fragrant dewy rose,
The lily pure and pale,
The flowers the garden shows,
To charm my spirit fail;
Their beauties I admire,
Their fragrance I inhale,—
Flowers of my fond desire,
Ye bloom in wood and vale!

I love the tender bloom
On Nature's blushing face;
The violet's soft perfume,
The cowslip's drooping grace,
The hyacinth's azure bells,
Primrose in paley gold,
Starring the woody dells,
And gemming mead and wold."

The following stanzas from verses descriptive of an early morning walk in the latter end of April 1830, illustrate her feeling for spring, and show an eye and soul for truthful, original, and loving delineation, and in several of the lines a felicity of idealising expression which is characteristic of the true poet, and which comes only from the unconscious flow of imagination into the world of the senses:—

"The blithe voice of spring through the woodlands was ringin',
Frae her nest 'mang the gowans the laverock was springin';
The breeze was asleep, but the burnie was singin',
And clear blabs o' dew frae ilk green blade was hingin'.

The red-lippit gowan had closed her sweet mou',
But the cup o' the primrose was lippin' wi' dew,
An' the hyacinth had kaimed oot her ringlets o' blue,
Till the dell o' their fragrance and beauty was fu';
An' the lone star that hings o'er the ee-bree o' morn
Grew pale, for young day her bricht tresses had shorn;
And aye she grew paler, till, dim and forlorn,
She sank in the red clouds that herald the morn.
Then a rich gowden stream frae the fountain o' licht
Gush'd oot—an' the mists that had happit the nicht
Row'd up frae the glens, and were gane out o' sicht,
And the green earth lay smilin' sae lown and sae bricht.
The great fires are luntin'—hoo fragrant the smells,
This bab o' the heather, and bonnie bluebells,
This twig o' green birk—oh, I canna weel tell
Hoo the sicht and the scent gars my fu' bosom swell."

Her feeling for October, her natal month, was very strong and tender. Again and again does she recur to it, in some nine different poems. Her picturing of it is direct, almost literally faithful, with just enough of that suffusion of pathos and undercurrent of appropriate suggestion to make the picture for the eye also an object for the heart to brood upon. In 'October Thoughts' (1862) we have the following lines:—

"A solemn tender melancholy,
A soft emotion, sweet and holy;
A sense of stillness and repose
O'er my warm heart and spirit flows.
I feel the breathing calm that lies
On earth and sea and sleeping skies,
Upon the yellow voiceless woods,
Where fading nature mournful broods.
The stubble field—brown, silent, bare—
Not even a gleaner wandering there.
I seem by the death-couch to stand,
Of some grey father of the land,
And hark! 'mid twilight shadows dim
The robin chants his funeral hymn.
Now, o'er the landscape slowly sailing,
Robes of mist around her trailing,

Comes the night—bright, mild, and gracious;
Through the blue ethereal spacious
Walks the full-orbed moon in splendour,
Chaste, serene, and meekly tender."

After blindness came upon her, she makes some touching references to the scenes of the outward world which she had noted and loved so well. Thus, in a 'Ballad of Memorie,' she plaintively sings:—

"Nae mair, alas! nae mair I'll see
Young morning's gowden hair
Spread ower the lift—the dawnin' sheen
O' simmer mornin' fair!
Nae mair the heathery knowe I'll speel,
An' see the sunbeams glancin'
Like fire-flauchts, ower the loch's lane breast,
Ower whilk the breeze is dancin'.

Nae mair I'll wanner ower the braes,
Or thro' the birken shaw,
An' pu' the wild-wud flowers amang
Thy lanely glens, Roseha'!
How white the haw, how red the rose,
How blue the hyacinth bell,

When fairy thim'les woo the bees
In Tenach's brecken dell!

. . . . . .

Nae mair I'll hear the cushie doo',
Wi' voice o' tender wailin',
Pour out her plaint, nor laverock's sang,
Up 'mang the white clouds sailin';
The lappin' waves that kiss the shore,
The music o' the streams,
The roarin' o' the linn nae mair
I'll hear but in my dreams.

When a' the house are gane to sleep,
I sit my leefu' lane,
And muse till fancy streaks her wing,
An' I am young again.
Again I wanner through the wuds,
Again I seem to sing
Some waefu' auld-warld ballant strain,
Till a' the echoes ring.

. . . . . .

Again I wanner ower the lea,
And pu' the gowans fine;
Again I paidle in the burn,
But, oh! it's lang sin' syne!

Again your faces blythe I see,
  Your gladsome voices hear,—
Frien's o' my youth—a' gane, a' gane!
  An' I sit blin'lins here.

The star o' memory lichts the past,
  But there's a licht abune,
To cheer the darkness o' a life
  That maun be endit sune.
An' oft I think the gowden morn,
  The purple gloamin' fa',
Will shine as bricht, an' fa' as saft,
  When I hae gane awa'."

Of the living writers of the time I do not speak. The diffusion of the feeling for nature is now so wide that it may be regarded, at least among true poets, or those in whose heart there is the primary requisite of sensibility and reverence in presence of nature and the power which it reveals, as no longer distinctive, but a common possession. To give quotations from living writers would be largely to increase the bulk of the book, adding, no doubt, to its illustrative effect, but not widening its true scope as an exposition of the principles of de-

scriptive art. The feeling for nature has now become part of the daily atmosphere of the Scottish poet, to a considerable extent even of the Scottish people. It is only distinguished by greater or less degrees of purity, and by a wider or narrower reach, both among poets and people. My hope is that it will grow more intense, constant, and pure. I see in its fuller development the prospect of a higher culture and more refined civilisation. I rejoice to think that the flower of nature-feeling, which, in the course of the centuries, has come to its fulness in our own day, is not only rich and splendid, but that it appears ever and again in many a humble nook, in many an unlooked-for quarter, even among the sons of toil; that it is as widespread, indeed, as the wild-flowers of the land, and often to be found, like one of these, in spontaneous bloom in out-of-the-way glens,—the solitary and precious glory of the burnside, or the radiance that lights the cottar's brae.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ART IN LANDSCAPE-PAINTING, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS RISE AND PROGRESS ON THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE AND IN SCOTLAND.

LANDSCAPE-PAINTING, in its rise and progress on the continent of Europe and in Britain, especially Scotland, affords pertinent illustrations of the principles exemplified in descriptive poetry, and already stated in the foregoing pages. Without at all professing to go into full details on this branch of the subject, I think it well to note the points of analogy, and to show generally the historical relations of landscape art in painting and in poetry. It will be found that, while in Scotland and England the poetry of nature was first, and led on to landscape-painting, on the Continent, and especially in Italy, this order was reversed: the rich, wide outflow of

painting took precedence in time and in quality of poetical description and feeling for nature. Long before the poetry of nature was developed in Italy or Germany, the feeling for landscape in art had grown in strength, purity, and width of scope. Its progress and development were no doubt very gradual, and illustrate the general principles previously laid down regarding the manifestations of the æsthetical sense. It is true that Minnesinger and Troubadour felt the power of the softer and brighter side of nature, and expressed it in the love-song as early as the miniature painters did the same thing in art; and doubtless the two, poet and painter, acted and reacted on each other. But after this common beginning of the two arts, painting very soon became the more powerful in feeling, scope, and expression, and left the poetry far behind.

"Miniature painting" came after the somewhat stiff and formal period of the "Illumination of Manuscripts," and was the real source of modern landscape art. As Troubadour and Minnesinger, the miniature painter loved the soft, gentle, and bright in nature—the accessibly beautiful in flower and meadow, in spring and summer sky.

This is the subject of the earliest miniature art, and of the landscape of the fifteenth century.

"Heavens glowing in the purest light, little flocks of white cloud cross the purest blue, but this is only to show the more its depth and purity. . . . An earth to match the heavens, green and smiling. . . . No dead leaf, no dry branch, bestrews the earth upon which the holy personages tread, and no flower is crushed beneath their feet." * Young art, in a word, rejoiced in the soft, bright, and smiling side of nature; and deemed that appropriate to lives of saints and their visions fixed habitually on "the new heavens" and "the new earth." This was not less suitable to the lover's mood, as depicted by Troubadour and Minnesinger, in the rise of the new passion of which they sang — the pure emotion as contrasted with the lower physical sensation, now absorbed in the higher glow of a purified and refined admiration.

Like some of our early poetical descriptions, as we have seen, miniature painting was a kind of cataloguing or "mapping" of a number of objects in a given space, each as a rule faith-

* Von Eye, quoted in Gilbert, *Landscape in Art*, p. 376.

fully and truthfully depicted.* But composition in the proper sense of the word—the grouping which makes a whole—was hardly known or practised. Art, in so far as it ought to seek completeness and unity of impression, was in a state of vacillation and groping.

Landscape art in painting is really not older as an independent branch, and thus as indicating an object deemed worthy to be sought for its own sake, than the first half of the seventeenth century. The work of the Illuminator and the Miniature Painter in landscape was purely secondary and accessory. And we have in the Illuminator constantly the background of gold with the simple primary colours in the picture, placed in juxtaposition without softening or gradation. This meant simply conventional ornamentation. It was not until toward the end of the fourteenth century that anything like a real landscape was formed as an accessory to the narrative or scene depicted. And then the ingredients, as a rule, were simply the blue heaven above and the green earth below. But this led to the wondrous development of the feeling for nature and its

* See Gilbert, p. 159.

expression on the part of John van Eyck, one of the most powerful and original workers in the whole history of art. Lord Lindsay calls him "the father of landscape-painting." Certainly to no one in the history of European art does painting in all its breadth owe more than to Van Eyck. "He was the first to feel, or at least to express in art, that enjoyment of natural beauty out of doors to which, judging from their early painting at least, the Italians seem to have been originally less susceptible than the Teutonic race,—unquestionably less conscious and demonstrative of it." *

A very competent authority says of Van Eyck:—

"John van Eyck was certainly the first, aided as he was by the oil and varnish medium he perfected, to shed over a landscape the vivid glow of sunlight atmosphere. . . . He first, too, so far as we know, recognising the charm of distance, laid out a vast and vanishing view; he first gave on panel the delicacy of contour and tint of distant mountain forms; he, first of painters, saw the snowy Alps shining in the

* *Christian Art*, vol. iii. p. 305. Quoted by Gilbert, pp. 153, 154.

sky, and in several of these points he was not only the first, but has remained to this day foremost." * Yet this height which Van Eyck had reached was hard to hold. Individual insight and genius had seen and shown the way to the best in landscape art; but the sphere to which he had called them was too pure and serene for those coming immediately after him to breathe and live in. His work was to tell with wondrous effect in the long-run, but that was later in the works of Claude, Poussin, and the art of Italy.

What is true of Van Eyck and Flemish art holds also of Masaccio (1402-1428) and Italian art. Masaccio showed a pure love for nature, and a widened insight "beyond green fields, brown rock, blue hills, and glittering waters. He felt the soul that was in nature, especially that which breathes in the solitary, the sad, the mysterious. But it was long before Italian art recognised what he had done." † Masaccio, born in the upper valley of the Arno, was the first man in Italian art who felt the power of mountains, rounded in contour, and sloping long and largely to the base, while clouds lie along

* Gilbert, *Landscape in Art*, p. 154. † *Ibid.*

and touch their summits. His soul was filled with the solitude, the dignity, and the silence of the enfolding hills. In the 'Tribute Money,' his mountain background, with its rounded and wavy lines, and its suggestion of loneliness, might stand for the upper reach of many an unvisited burn in the wilds of Tweedsmuir.

German art at this period was very imperfect in its recognition of natural beauty, though it showed a study so far of the real. It was in Venice that landscape art now was gradually developed to its higher stage. This began with Gentile da Fabriano, grew till it reached Pordenone, and it culminated in Titian, and, we may add, Tintoretto,—a period of two centuries, from after 1360 to the date of the death of Titian in 1576. The great features of the Venetian school of landscape art, as represented at least by its greatest genius, Titian, are a remarkable width of view and sympathy with nature, grandeur of subject, subtle colouring, and a splendour which remains although subdued. "The charm of morning among blue hills had indeed been felt by Cima, Basaiti, and perhaps some others; and the sweetness of a calm resplendent twilight had found many admirers,

as Perugino, Bartolommeo, Bellini, and Giorgione witness. But Titian took a wider sweep, and in changeful light and shade over the level champaign, in noble mountain form, in clouds, in trees and forests, in the wide sea, he found a poetry, a pathos, a sentiment, that others had only occasionally observed." * Titian unquestionably, as has been said by more than one competent judge, stands at the head of landscape art. No one in art before him had seen as he saw the fusion and the natural fitness, as twin powers, between mountain and cloud. "It would seem as if, between Lucretius and Titian, no observant eye had witnessed that magnificence." †

Tintoretto, impetuous, hurried, and dashing in execution, felt the awesome side of nature in a special manner,—its gloom and its storm. But from the heights alike of Titian and Tintoretto, Italian art fell away, into a conventionalism which sought effect by rule gathered from preceding examples. So rare a thing is this feeling for nature in its truth, simplicity, and breadth, and so difficult apparently for art continuously to sustain.

* *Landscape in Art*, p. 342.

† *Ibid.*, p. 355; and Ruskin, *Modern Painters.*

After what has been said of preceding artists and their work, it is somewhat ludicrous to find the men, the great men even of the seventeenth century, spoken of as "the founders of landscape art." The founders they are not. But this is true, that they carried on the development in a worthy manner; and while in their predecessors landscape was simply accessory to figure and incident, it took in their hands a place of its own, as an end in itself. Formerly, men were permitted to look on landscape as a background, to see it peeping in through a window or between drapery. Now, it became, as it well might, the principal object, to be studied, loved, portrayed for its own sake. In this seventeenth century, landscape-painting occupied a first place, and we have not since lost the sense, at least, of the ideal standard of the work, however unworthily we in many respects have actually fallen short of it; or deviated into that literalness which is prosaic, where the soul of inspiration is awanting; or accepted, as a substitute for imagination, mere fancy, whose product is fragmentary, although it may be picturesque. The three imperishable art names of this century are, as every one knows, Claude Lorraine (1600-1682),

Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), Gaspar Poussin (1613-1675). The many-sidedness of Titian was distributed among those three men of power, and each probably added some perfection to the side of art which inspired him. In Lorraine appears the landscape of central and southern Italy, dominated by a sentiment of supreme loveliness and peace. In Salvator, the landscape is as passionate and stormful as was his own nature and the scenes of his early life. He painted the grandeur of crag, mountain depth, forest gloom, and storm, and he felt the pathos of ruin. His field was the irregularity, the magnificence, and the mystery of romance in nature. Poussin was the master of movement and of the power of imaginative construction.*

One striking and remarkable fact is that, in the case of nearly every one of those men now referred to, who exhibited the greatest originality in art, and introduced a new aspect of nature, the first impulse to it was given by the scene of his boyhood or early youth. It was so with Masaccio, eminently so with Titian in his boyish home among the mountains of Cadore, with Sal-

* On this whole subject see Gilbert's *Landscape Art* and Ruskin's chapters in *Modern Painters.*

vator Rosa in his youthful wanderings among the wilds with the brigands; and the experience of early scenery determined in a great measure the bent of Lorraine and Poussin. The progress of art, in fact, like all other great human movements, is at the mercy of no formula, and can be expressed by none. It has its flow and its ebb—its action and its reaction; but this is controlled very clearly and principally by the cast of individual genius. Only this is true, that the moment the highest stage is reached in any given branch, there is a tendency to decline—to fall back, in fact, on a skilful conventional imitation; and when this perishes, as perish it must, there is generally a casting abroad—an outlook—for some special form or side of nature which had not before been touched, or at least received marked prominence.

While abroad on the continent of Europe, and in Italy especially, painting was first to feel and to depict nature, poetry following at a great distance in its wake; in Scotland, and in England as well, poetry was first, and led painting in the way to nature. And even now, when landscape-painting has attained so commanding a

position in Britain, it cannot be said to have surpassed in its reach or its skill the word-painting of Scott, Shelley, and Wordsworth. Turner must be regarded as occupying a wholly unique and exceptional place of mastership; but so far as truth, inner feeling of the soul of nature, and power of expression are concerned, even his work can be paralleled in modern poetry, in so far as the two arts can be compared.

In Scotland the precedence in time of poetry over painting, whether landscape or other, is very marked. George Jamesone of Aberdeen (1586-1644) is regarded as the first Scottish painter. Along with Van Dyck, Jamesone was the pupil of Rubens. He is supposed to have touched landscape in a sort; but he was really a portrait-painter, hardly even a delineator of figure-scenes. He barely rose to imaginative composition.

From the date of Jamesone's death to near the end of the century, there was, owing to social and political circumstances, little room for art in Scotland. William Aikman (1682-1731) followed as a portrait-painter. John Alexander, the grandson of Jamesone, was in the same line, though he has left us the 'Rape of Proserpine' on the

staircase at Gordon Castle. Allan Ramsay (1709-1784), the son of the poet, found nothing apparently in his father's pictures of the country and rural manners to inspire him. He rose to the distinction of being portrait-painter to George III. David Martin (born 1730) was a portrait-painter in Edinburgh, noted for literally faithful likenesses. Gavin Hamilton (born about 1730, died 1797) followed certain classical models in composition,—in grouping and costume.

Alexander Runciman (1736-1785) visited Italy. He showed some imagination in painting subjects from the Ossianic poems, which had now begun to influence the feeling of the country.

When painting turned from portraiture in Scotland,—from the individual to the national subject,—it was not the scenery of the country which at first attracted the attention of the artist, but rural life and manners. The first work in this line was done by David Allan (1744-1796), late in the century. Allan had studied in the Glasgow Academy of the Fine Arts, established by the brothers Foulis in that city. And just as in Scottish poetry the earlier predominating influence had been in the descrip-

tion of the life and manners of the people, and as that had come to its climax in this century in Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns, so these proved the attractive subjects of the painter's art, now that it was gaining strength. Thus it was that Allan gave as his most remarkable pictures, 'The Penny Wedding' and 'Sir William Worthy.'

In the same line as David Allan there followed Sir David Wilkie (1785-1841), the greatest painter of Scottish rural life and manners,—from 'The Village Politicians' in 1806, through the powerful series of 'The Blind Fiddler,' 'Card-players,' 'Rent-day,' 'Blind-man's Buff,' 'Village Festival,' 'Reading the Will,' &c. Truthfulness, domesticity, pathos, and humour are the characteristics of Wilkie's work at its best. He has given us delineations of ordinary Scottish character and life as true, as exquisite, as in the word-painting of James I., Sir David Lyndsay, Ramsay, or Burns.

Sir William Allan (1782-1850), a fellow-student of Wilkie's, devoted himself to portrait and historical painting,—in the latter often touching powerfully Scottish national life. Art was thus gradually widening to its adequate sphere. One interesting point is here worthy

of note. Scottish art and Scottish poetry met and were fused in the edition of 'The Gentle Shepherd' of Ramsay, published towards the middle of the century, to which David Allan contributed appropriate illustrations of scenery and manners. This was the conciliation, so to speak, of Scottish art and poetry, directed, with the energy of active brotherhood, to the scenery of our native land.

But, with all this, we were still a long way from Scottish landscape, with its tenderness, its variety, its grandeur, and its power of impression. Sir Henry Raeburn (1756-1823) came to occupy the public mind as by far the greatest Scottish portrait-painter before or since his time; but he had little or no feeling for landscape—indeed, expressly held it as simply accessory to portrait and figure painting. In this respect Raeburn was thus no nearer to the modern feeling for nature and landscape art than were the Italian artists before Titian—in fact, not nearly so far advanced. He was simply a deft-handed man of the world around him, and excellently adapted to the needs of his time for setting on immortal canvas the respectabilities and beauties of the day, adding much to their

sense of self-importance in their lifetime, and leaving to posterity always admirable examples of finished art, sometimes of interesting human faces. No one more than Raeburn has dignified the money-bringing, the bread-and-butter side of art.

Jacob Moore (1740-1793) is spoken of as the earliest landscape-painter of Scottish extraction. He was born in Edinburgh, where he studied under Alexander Runciman. He went to Rome in 1773, lived there chiefly for the rest of his life, and died there in 1793. His style of landscape was fashioned after that of Claude Lorraine, and his subjects were taken chiefly from the Campagna and the neighbourhood of Rome. He was a man of note in his line and time. Goethe visited him in 1787, and was attracted by his works. Moore does not seem to have been much in Scotland; but the scenes of his native land had evidently some attraction for him, for after his death, John Landseer engraved in 1795 twenty views by him of the south of Scotland. These were among the first efforts at delineating the native scenery.

Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840) is generally regarded as the founder of the Scottish school

of landscape art. Beginning as a portrait-painter, he was led by his taste to landscape. Nasmyth was a pupil of Allan Ramsay, but he had obviously a broader feeling for his art than his master. The influence of Nasmyth is seen more or less on all the landscape art of Scotland down to our own day, especially on his more immediate successors—his son Patrick Nasmyth, Anthony Stewart, George Watson, Andrew Wilson, Henry Williams, and, last and greatest of all, John Thomson of Duddingston.

From Nasmyth to Thomson of Duddingston we may note a school of Scottish landscape art, different in several aspects from what may be called the more modern school in Scotland. The aim of artists of the earlier school was to represent the impression made on the mind by a scene of nature, its subjective effect rather than its exact objective features. This school did not care much—certainly not most of all, perhaps not sufficiently—for truthfulness of detail, though in this it was far from wanting. What it sought, however, principally to give, was the effect of a given scene on the mind of the spectator — an effect obviously got in some first intuition, but kept, garnered, carefully

brooded over, until it grew in the soul of the artist to a picturable impression. Details were secondary; effect, general impression, became primary—that which the artist felt and sought to delineate. This accounts for the power and for the defects of the earlier style—the power greatly transcending the defects. The typical man early in this line was Alexander Nasmyth, and the man, too, whose study of detail will bear close comparison with the work of artists of his own type, and even of the later Scottish class. In this particular, I should point, for example, to his 'Stirling Castle' in the National Gallery. It is a noble picture. You have trees; water in the near and farther foreground; the castle somewhat dimly lined in the distance; to the left, a glorious glimpse of the mountains, round and far away; a fine distant top, of perhaps Benledi, towering up against the luminous cloud—the pure transparency of the white clouds rising until the blue shades into them and overtops them. Withal there is a perfect unity of impression, one general characteristic tone of atmosphere, and all details so grouped as to form one whole of harmonious feeling.

Patrick Nasmyth (1786-1831), the son of

Alexander, whom his father taught, was among the first, if not the very first, of Scottish artists to venture out on the wilds. He has left us a picture of 'Glenshira,' a wild Highland defile, rendered more wild by one or two solitary figures passing through it. In the cleaving of the rocky glen a burn makes its way over a cascade; one single yellowing birk-tree hangs off the straight on the rock to the right, gripping it as only the birk can do; some foxgloves that have shed their flowers rear their solitary stalks in the foreground. There is in it all a pure abandonment to free wild nature—that side of it which had not been touched in Scottish poetry; for Scott as yet had not painted Ellen's Isle or the Trossachs. Criticism, I daresay, will find faults in detail; but the rocks are in the main truthfully done, both those which had long ago crashed down, the gaps in which nature has carefully healed, and the splintered fragments that remain unsmoothed; and there is no mistaking the singleness of impression of the whole.

Andrew Wilson (1780-1848), a pupil of Nasmyth, was distinguished for his Italian landscapes. The 'View of Burntisland,' in

the National Gallery, is, however, very characteristic of the unity of feeling of the school to which Wilson belonged. It has many elements of truthfulness to the locality and the Scottish shore, with a distinctly foreign infusion —a suggestion more particularly of the style of Canaletto.

It was in the hands of John Thomson, the minister of Duddingston (1778-1840), that Scottish landscape art first assumed its true place and scope. Thomson had a real love for the scenery of his native land. He wandered over Scotland, sketch-book in hand, and sought the scenery with a face-to-face directness. Hence the fulfilment of the first requisite of the artist —truthfulness of delineation. A scene of nature in itself, without accessories of incident or life, sufficed him for art. From the window of the manse of Duddingston he would watch, we are told, the moonbeams gleam over Craigmillar, and often lovingly transfer the scene to canvas. It is further said of him that long ere this, when a lad, he would get up at two o'clock of a summer morning, and walk mile after mile from his father's manse at Dailly to watch the effects of the sunlight as it pierced and transfigured

the leafage of the trees on that rich western side of Scotland.

Thomson exhibited the best characteristics of the older schools, and in the strongest efforts of art. If ever artist sought unity of impression, Thomson did. Not that there was lacking carefulness in detail, often scrupulousness, truthfulness to Scottish landscape. But what Thomson felt and aimed to represent was the general effect of a scene on the mind,—that which rose into memory after the mere literalities of detail had comparatively faded. And this is true art, —its real lasting method. Among the nearest of Thomson's efforts to literal reproduction of Scottish scenery is probably that picture of 'Aberlady Bay,' which so impressed and astonished the people of the time when it was first painted and exhibited in 1822. He has caught the features of the shore, the look of the sky, when the sun is not overwhelmingly bright, but rather veiled by that not quenching, softened stream of pearly white. Trees and sea, too, are well done; and the impression of the whole is such as any brooding and reflective person loitering there on a summer afternoon may see and carry away as a possession for ever.

But Thomson did not by any means confine himself to the gentle scene of a summer afternoon. Of the one hundred and nine works which he contributed to the Exhibitions in Edinburgh from 1808 to 1840, the most have for their subjects the grander scenes of Scottish landscape—often the noble old castles and stirring historical objects; for Thomson's heart was not only in the scenery but in the story of Scotland. And we must keep in mind that this impulse,—beginning at least in 1808, only three years after the appearance of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' and probably working long before,—was not altogether a consequence of the literary work of Scott, but at least contemporary with it, and probably a cause of it, certainly a very helpful auxiliary.

Among other of his grander historical scenes, so well mixed with a feeling for the nature around it, Thomson has given us 'Ravensheugh Castle'—that very castle which appears in the Dirge of Rosabelle. Main object in the picture — concentrating all attention, yet fused with and leading on to the light which illumines the sea, and touches its western tops and turrets, evidently a gleaming outburst of western sunset

—is that mediæval stronghold of the old Lords of St Clair. Yet the whole scene holds you as one fine light-illumined and one emotioned landscape, no feature in it exaggerated, none diverting the attention from the one central conception of the artist.

'Turnberry Castle' has the same characteristic of unity—a fortress standing strong in a weird and powerful array against a horizontally barred, sun-smit sky; not, however, giving us more than a very mediate effect amid the dark, heavy, greyish-blue background. It is too monotonous in colour all over—too much of that deep monotone of a dark-brown or tawny tone, which affects Thomson and all the men of his school. This uniformity of colouring was no doubt connected with that method of painting which trusted to the mental impression retained in the memory, over which they brooded in their studio, and which, in its comparative sinking of details, was at once their weakness and their strength.

Thomson painted 'The Trossachs' in his characteristic style. It gives the free, wild feeling of the Highland scene; and the showery storm-cloud over all is a delightful feature. But it is too sombre in colouring—brown, with that in-

discriminating shade which blurs the different objects. Yet it is a powerful picture: there is the fine romantic sense and sympathy, and it brings Scottish landscape art into close relationship with the free feeling for wild nature characteristic of its best descriptive poetry in Scott.

Thomson no doubt was mainly absorbed in the grander aspects of our scenery, in its darker and sterner moods, in rock and wilderness. He sought also the picturesque side of the beautiful —as, for example, the solitary fir-tree against the sky-line, so striking in its quiet pathos; but he was very intense, and very faithful to our hills, our glens, and our moorlands. Further, he delighted in the grandeur of broken and therefore picturesque ruin, with its powerful and ever-stirring associations, as in 'Turnberry Castle,' 'Dunstaffnage,' 'Dunluce,' and 'Wolf's Crag.' In this he showed his kinship of genius to that of Scott, and departed markedly from the earlier classical style of untouched strength of tower and wall. There is in Thomson, no doubt, as has been often remarked, evidence of the study and manner of Claude and Poussin. In the technique of execution this is to some extent true; but it is also true that he was the first

Scottish painter in whom the general scenery of his native land was a self-sufficing, absorbing object of interest and of art; and who was able to produce it on canvas as it had never been represented before. Thomson was the first great landscape-painter of Scotland; and in pure imaginative impressiveness he has not yet been surpassed, if equalled.

I doubt, however, whether Thomson, with all those more than a hundred paintings from 1808 to 1840, would have been possible without Scott,—had he not nobly dared to give us in 'The Lady of the Lake,' in 'Marmion,' and in 'The Lord of the Isles,' those aspects of free, wild, and sublime nature which were for the first time limned by imagination in Scottish literature or art. I seem to see in Thomson's work the decided influence of Scott: this certainly helped and sustained the untiring effort of the minister of the Kirk, who undoubtedly had nothing therein to sustain him,—only glances askant, shruggings of the shoulders about lack of absorption in or attention to parochial work: not in that quarter a sympathising glance, or recognition of the unity of the heart of imagination and worship, had the min-

ister of Duddingston through all those years. Men had not then, and they have not greatly now, learned to feel the unity of soul at the heart of reverence and in the pulse of the outward world of God.

The work of Thomson, permeated as it was by that of Scott, has had a great influence on the history and development of Scottish art,—more, I think, a great deal than we know or acknowledge. It was of immense importance that the attention of young artists should be drawn to the scenes all over Scotland,—to its old castles, its picturesque ruins; to the then almost unknown and unvisited regions of the Highlands,—to the Trossachs, Loch Awe, Loch Etive, Blaven, and Cuchullin. This Thomson did in painting, as Scott had done before him, partly alongside of him, in poetry.

Early in this century we have an alliance of art with poetry in the pictures of Border scenes and towers contributed to the poems of Scott by one whose heart was in thorough sympathy with the Great Minstrel — John Alexander Schetky (1785-1824).

The antiquarian drawing of Schetky suggests another important element in art, which has

led to a more faithful study of nature than before—that is, water-colour drawing as applied first to ancient buildings and then to landscape. There can be no doubt that the rise of water-colour painting in Britain has had an immense deal to do in leading to truthfulness of picturing, especially in colouring. Taking its rise in an interest in old buildings — in a word, antiquarianism—it began by indicating simply black and grey; then it grew to tinting for variety in colour. But the artist had always, as has been pointed out, to keep his eye on the object, and to reproduce the forms and colours exactly as they were seen, because the drawing, to be of value, must be historically accurate. Hence the art led to extreme and minute faithfulness to natural appearances—the very point in which painting in oils was most commonly, though not necessarily, deficient. To our water-colour drawings, thus, we owe the enhancing of the much-needed lesson of truth to things as they are; and it will probably be in the future the greatest preservative against falling into unfaithfulness in the delineation of nature.

And further, as has been well remarked, water-colour work meets especially the require-

ments of the English, more especially the Scottish, landscape, with its varying atmosphere and its passing mists, its airy distances, its greenery and foliage—the exquisite softness of cloud, for example, mingled with pearly light, which droops from the heaven outstretched over a line of long wavy Border hills, on a day in early June.

Clearly it was Sir Walter Scott and Thomson who opened up those scenes as possibilities for the artists who were to follow. Since then, we have had a large appreciation of this field of art. We have had William Simson (1800-1847) in water-colour; Thomas Duncan (1807-1845); Robert Scott Lauder (1803-1869); Horatio Macculloch (1805-1867), with his grand, impressive, but somewhat sensuous and soulless realism; Sam Bough (1828-1878), with remarkable breadth and power; the lamented Paul Chalmers, who knew, felt, and gave the true heart of the Scottish moorland; and we have still among us noble representatives of landscape art.

Consciously or unconsciously, these men have been influenced by Thomson of Duddingston and by Sir Walter Scott, in theme and general feeling. Sir George Harvey (1806-1876)

limned the quiet, pastoral, sheep-dotted slopes of the Border hills—alas! too scantily, but still in the line of the Minstrel of the Border, with an infusion of the spirit of Wordsworth. It is true, that in the later art of these men we find a greater faithfulness to nature, to colour and form, to light, shadow, and transparency,—to all those features which make the distinctive picture, as opposed to that which fails of perfection from its tendency to generalisation. Yet we must keep in mind that the later artists started from a vantage-ground; that they had been led up to a point of vision, a mount of outlook, by the faithful work, the energy of new conception, of the earlier men. This preceding and preparatory power is a thing which is easily forgotten,—often goes for nothing of note in the world of science, philosophy, literature, and art; yet without it the later higher perfection could never have been reached. In thinking over the progress in art, letters, philosophy, one is constantly struck with the small and unworthy recognition which the earlier man, who was the first to conceive the new idea, to point the new line, to rise by his intellectual, moral, or imaginative energy to the new

conception, receives at the hands of those who follow him and profit by his work. The man who profits by his predecessor, even overtops him, though perhaps wholly inferior to him in gift, and brings the new line a little higher—to perfection, it may be, at least to recognition—is the only one who gets the acknowledgment or the plaudits of the world. It is the unthinking, the people satisfied with the present, who rule the world of repute. The reward, fortunately, is not there; it is in the heart of every man of power who works with an impulse worthy of his manhood.

Since Thomson, the tendency of Scottish landscape art has been so far in the right direction of greater faithfulness to features and details of scenes. Its characterising has been more specific and minute. The old conventional ways that had come down in the teaching and tradition are mostly abandoned. But it seems to be forgotten that art does not mean mere realism,—a simple copy and imitation of a given scene; that it should aim at a typical representation of the real, the exhibition of the scene such as will enable one to recognise it as a true reproduction, not only of the facts but the feeling

embodied,—that feeling which permeates every landscape worthy of the painter's art. And in execution it should be kept in mind that painting means something different from mapping or cataloguing on a given space certain features or objects,—setting them before the eye and mind as each a nice point in itself,—without regard to unity or completeness of impression. The merit of realism is no doubt truthfulness; but as practised, we have frequently the essential defect of lack of true composition.

We should at the same time have greater cause of gratitude if the artists in landscape would widen their range of vision, look less to mere sensuous grandeur and impressiveness, and be able to give us the power of the tender, the pathetic, and the solitary spirit, to be found chiefly through love and holy passion and brooding reflection, in that district of Scotland which lies between the Pentlands and the Cheviots—the weird wilds at the heads of the Tweed, the Yarrow, the Ettrick, and the Teviot. Nay, we should rejoice if they would touch truthfully and lovingly the picturesqueness of the bracken burns and the birken glens, with grey rowaned rock and linn-pool, which have

been waiting for art appreciation through the centuries. Surely what George Harvey began to do, and unfortunately ceased to carry far, might be taken by some young energetic artist, who unites to eye-power and deft touch that pathos of heart without which no one can read or interpret the scenery of Lowland Scotland.

David Scott (1806-1849) holds a unique place in Scottish art as the greatest of its imaginative painters. For grand ideal and weird power we have noting in Scottish art equal to 'Sarpedon carried by Sleep and Death,' or 'Vasco da Gama encountering the Spirit of the Cape,' to say nothing of the illustrations of 'The Ancient Mariner.' The side of art which Scott chose, and to which he was impelled by an overpowering impulse of genius, is that which has been least cultivated in Scottish painting.

While we have to come down so late for the commencement of landscape art in Scotland, we ought to remember that it was hardly different in England, with all its great and increasing flow of descriptive poetry. The three brothers Smith of Norwich (1707-1766) were the first painters of landscape in England; and Richard

Wilson (1713-1782) is usually regarded as the founder of the English school of landscape. Wilson was thus the contemporary of the author of 'The Seasons,' and he was the first in English landscape art to paint a "snow scene." Probably enough this was but a reflex of the influence of the winter descriptions of Thomson. The art was carried to still higher perfection in Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788). In both, however, the scenes depicted are of the ordinary homely or domestic English order—such, in fact, as Cowper limned in verse in the familiar plains, woods, and streams of the Midlands. As yet the grandeur and the picturesqueness of Welsh or Highland mountain, glen, or torrent were wholly unknown to English art. This had, indeed, been touched long before by the Scottish Patrick Nasmyth; and Thomson of Duddingston had loved, worshipped, and delineated it, ere it was even felt by a single English artist. John Constable (1776-1837) followed Gainsborough, and we have subsequently Copley Fielding, Calcott, Collins, Creswick, Stansfield, James Ward, Birket Foster, Linnell, and Lee, and in water-colours the great name of David Cox. But British landscape art was raised to its highest

development, its widest reach, its most perfect accomplishment, in Joseph M. W. Turner (1775-1851)—the Shakespeare of landscape-painting.

The Pre-Raphælite movement, as it was called, began in 1849. If not precisely originated, it was sustained chiefly by the influence of the writings of John Ruskin,—the man of deepest insight into art in modern times—the man capable of embodying this insight in the finest imagery of language, in the purest melody of prose. Millais, Holman Hunt, Dante Rossetti, Ford Maddox Brown, Burne-Jones, are its chief representative names. This movement has profoundly influenced British art in all its forms, and it must continue to do so in the line of truthfulness, face-to-faceness with things, love, brooding, and passion for the spirit of nature. Whatever modifications this form of art may require to undergo in the line of subordination of details, and of the maintenance of unity in its work, we shall always welcome it for its nobler lessons, — chief among these the littleness of the individual, with his prepossessions and conceits, before the Power which moves, speaks, teaches in the world of the Senses,—the trans-

parent veil and symbol of the spiritual, which is unseen, but not unknown.

The true cannot be precisely identified either with what is moral or what is beautiful; and current modes of speech, which make those expressions convertible, arise from, and conduce to, confusion of thought. But truth always means a harmony — a harmony, it may be, between what we think or represent the world of fact to be, and that world as it is to our apprehension and generalisation; or truth may be the harmony in the course of our thinking— the harmony of probable and necessary connection in what we conceive about reality. And this element of harmony is common to the moral and the beautiful. The former lies in the correspondence of our motive and action with the law of duty — the grand ideals of righteousness, purity, and holiness. The beautiful in the outward world lies in the complete self-sufficing harmony of the object or scene with its own end or ideal — with itself, the harmony of part with part, the consent to the whole, the single, definite, unified effect which results from a spontaneous confluence of many

elements in one. This is an immanent harmony which appeals to the cultured eye and to the cultured races of mankind. The essence of the true, the beautiful, the good, is the element of pure harmony. Hence it is that the soul which is attuned to the beautiful, and is in ready response to its various forms, recognises and feels it in this familiar world of ours, has a sense of power which purifies and refines, which awes and subdues with reverence, brings under obedience rebellious impulses, and is a defence against evil and chaotic thoughts, and the best preparative for sympathy with the highest intellectual effort and the purest moral and spiritual life. The true lover of nature is above low and earthly impulses; he is at least in the vestibule of the Temple, and not far from the kingdom of God.

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